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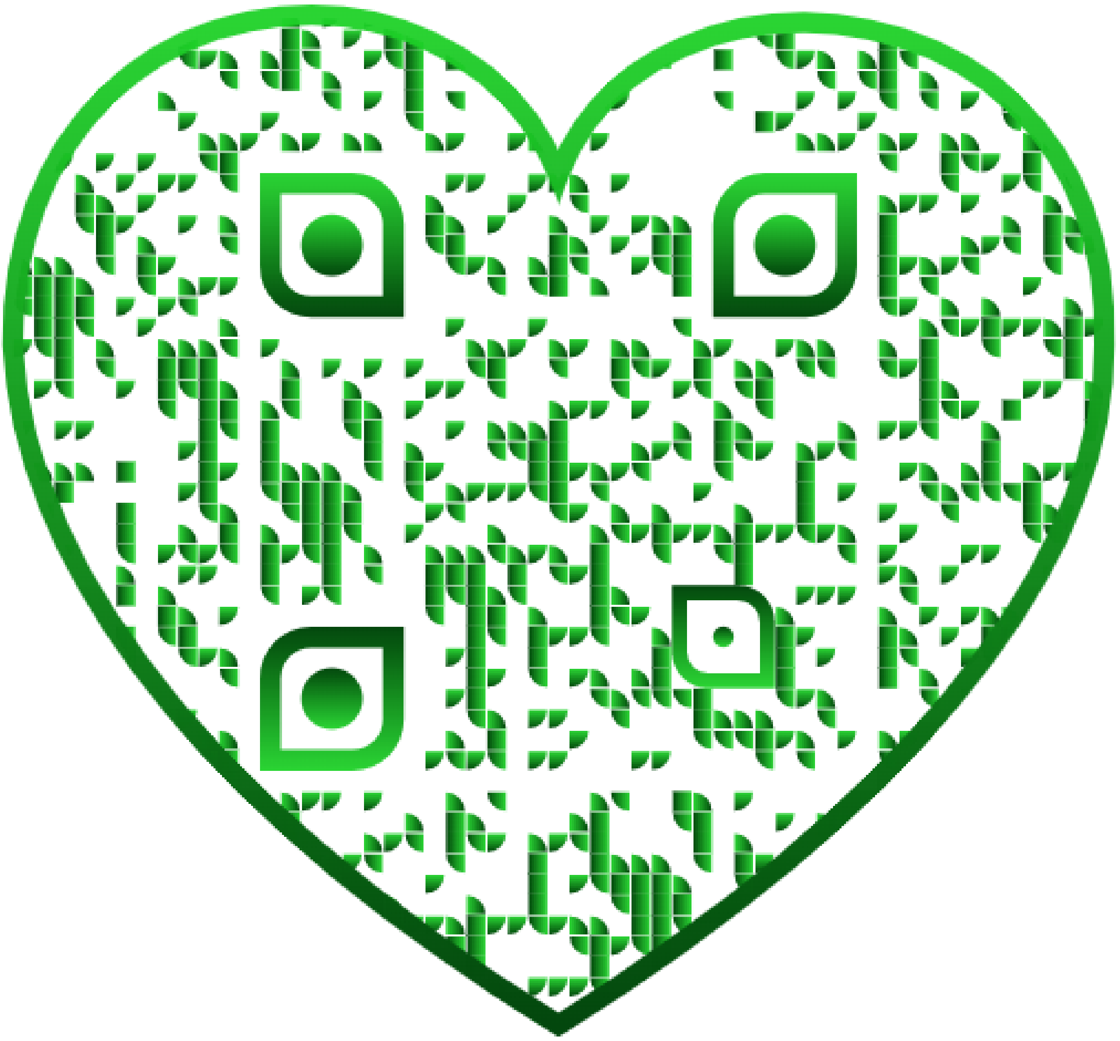
JOHN FOGERTY ON RECRIMINATIONS, REVIVALS AND REUNIONS*

*NEVER GONNA HAPPEN

ISSUE 343



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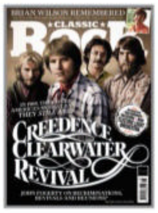
Bad Moon Rising, Proud Mary, Born On The Bayou, Fortunate Son, Up Around The Bend (my favourite, if push came to shove)... All songs that are intrinsically part of the fabric of classic rock, or let's be honest, popular music as a whole. And that's just a mere handful! They all came from Creedence Clearwater Revival and the mind and the pen of that band's guiding light, John Fogerty. This month we sat down with him to discuss the trials and tribulations of Creedence, his songwriting and his decision to reclaim his Creedence legacy (and songs) by 'doing a Taylor Swift' and re-visiting some of his classics. "I probably didn't deserve to have my songs stolen," he tells us. Read it from page 30.

Sadly, this month has also been a bit of a sobering one in terms of people who we have lost to the great gig in the sky. We pay tribute to Beach Boys mastermind Brian Wilson and funk rock legend Sly Stone and, as promised, publish the last in-depth interview with Rick Derringer. Next issue we will pay full tribute to Mick Ralphs, who passed away just as we were going to print.

Until next month...

Siân

Siân Llewellyn, Editor



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This month's contributors

BILL DeMAIN
The first time Bill interviewed Brian Wilson, it was at Capitol Records Studio in Los Angeles. Talk about good vibrations. A longtime Beach Boys fan, Bill was proud to celebrate Brian's life in this issue (p20). When he's not writing for *Classic Rock*, he's cartooning. His latest appear in *Alta Journal* and *Weekly Humorist*. You can see more of his work at his IG @bdmcartoons

SIMON HARPER
Deep diving into the troubled tale of Creedence Clearwater Revival for this issue's cover story (p30) was a welcome distraction to melting in June's blistering heatwave for Simon, who relished in chooglin' with John Fogerty, the mastermind of the short-lived yet sensational band. Simon is the founder and former editor of *Clash* magazine and is spending the summer in his studio and finishing the first season of his new Rolling Stones podcast.

JOE BOSSO
Joe has, over the past few decades, interviewed hundreds of guitarists for *Guitar World, Guitar Player* and *Classic Rock*. He is also a former editor of *Guitar World* and VP of A&R for Island Records. He's also an enthusiastic guitarist, but he's nowhere near the likes of the people he interviews. Last year, Joe finally persuaded Rick Derringer to agree to a rare interview. Read what the late, great guitarist had to say from p44.

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BRIXTON
ACADEMY
NO DOUBT

Actor Tendai Humphrey Sitima, Simon Parkes and Max Runham, who plays Parkes in *Brixton Calling*, outside Brixton Academy.

The Clash at Brixton Academy in 1984 during their Out Of Control tour.

The Dirt was compiled by Dave Everley, Rob Hughes, Hannah May Kilroy, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Chris Lord, Matt Mills, Dave Steinfeld

BRIXTON CALLING

New play tells the story of the entrepreneur who bought Brixton Academy for a quid.

A play based on the story of a young man who bought a derelict cinema for just one pound and turned it into one of London's most prestigious music venues opens at Southwark Playhouse Borough on July 23.

Simon Parkes was just 23 in 1983 when he stumped up a quid in an audacious deal that led to the birth of Brixton Academy. What makes the tale even more remarkable is that Parkes, a Thalidomide baby born with only one arm, had no background in entertainment nor any investors behind him. He spent 15 years painstakingly building the Academy, previously an old Victorian beer hall located in a rough, politically charged area of South London, into a venue of legends, its stage welcoming the cream of the music world, including Page & Plant, Deep Purple, Iron Maiden, Brian May and Ozzy Osbourne.

Parkes learned most of what he achieved on the fly, and his memoir *Live At The Brixton Academy: A Riotous Life In The Music Business* was full of tales of brushes with gangsters, drug dealers, police stings and, at the other end of the spectrum, tedious council bureaucrats. Following publication in 2014 it became a best-seller. When a copy fell into the hands of a writer and producer named Alex Unwin, the seeds of the play, *Brixton Calling*, were sown rapidly. Within months of a meeting with Parkes in a pub in Brixton – where else? – Unwin had written the play, brought in the Olivier-nominated director Bronagh Lagan and booked a run of performances at the Southwark Playhouse Borough, located just 15 minutes from the Academy itself.

> **"When gangsters hustled me, I showed no fear because I was unaware of what was going on."**
>
> **Simon Parkes**

Talking to *Classic Rock*, Parkes, who left the Academy in 1997, is thrilled by the prospect of the production, as well as being slightly nervous at being thrust back into the spotlight again. As our issue went to press, he had met Max Runham, the actor and musician who plays him in *Brixton Calling*, although rehearsals were still to commence. "Like me, Max has one arm," he marvels. "I was shocked that besides acting he also plays guitar – I'm not even sure how he does that."

The play includes many songs by well-known bands that played the Academy, and Parkes reveals that its content is coloured by the era's political nature. "One of the events that first put us on the map was five nights from The Clash, who were raising money for [union leader] Arthur Scargill's Christmas parties for striking miners," he explains. "In the early days we booked a lot of reggae before being in a position to break into [the market for] rock bands. The play follows those changes."

What followed is what the press release terms a "white knuckle ride" that along the way included Parkes having a gun thrust into his face. "I went in there very naively, but with an enormous amount of enthusiasm," Parkes admits. "I had no idea of what Brixton was like as a place, and in a way that helped. When gangsters hustled me, talking in riddles, I showed no fear because I was unaware of what was going on."

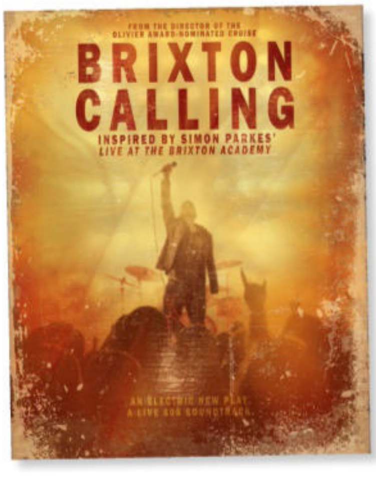
Among his greatest early coups was persuading the Red Hot Chili Peppers to play the Academy during a time when no British agencies would take Parkes seriously. So he flew to Los Angeles and told the band's management that his venue was 10 minutes away from Buckingham Palace (which technically is true, if calculated as the crow flies, across Victoria Park).

Recalling how he became involved with the Academy, Parkes tells of meeting with its owners, a brewery who sought £120,000 to sign it over. "The place had been shut for two years after reopening briefly as The Fair Deal, but it was in bad shape," he says. Armed with a spreadsheet that proposed using beer sales to cover the venue's costs, he convinced the brewery to accept a down-payment of one pound, plus 10 for every barrel of beer sold. "Over my tenure with the place, I think we sold seven million pounds worth of beer," he says, adding with a grin: "They loved me".

Purchasing the venue's lease allowed Parkes to put on bigger and bigger shows, However, there were dips along the way, including a personal bankruptcy when the bank foreclosed on him around the time of the Gulf War in the early 90s. "We lost a lot of bookings, and they panicked," he sighs. "I ended up losing my house. But I was young and single, and given the chance I'd do it all again."

Following a run that included Bob Dylan, Springsteen and the Stones, Parkes sold up in 1997. The Academy had additionally begun putting on raves, which wasn't his cup of tea. When plans for a summer music festival were unexpectedly torpedoed by the suicide of Kurt Cobain, Parkes admits: "I had achieved everything I could with the venue, and after the festival collapsed, so did my enthusiasm. I hung up my boots."

Long after Parkes had departed, the Academy made headlines for all of the wrong reasons. It was shut for 16 months after two people died and others were injured during a crush in December 2022. "The whole thing was tragic, as people lost their lives, but I'm glad that the venue wasn't closed down permanently, as I believe that it changed Brixton for the better," he says. "And besides, too many live music venues are shutting their doors."


FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE
OLIVIER AWARD-NOMINATED CRUISE
BRIXTON CALLING
INSPIRED BY SIMON PARKES'
LIVE AT THE BRIXTON ACADEMY

It has been reported that the UK now loses a grass-roots venue every fortnight. "It's all very shortsighted, as live entertainment generates a significant amount of money for this country, which is also exported across the world," Parkes points out.

Brixton Calling runs until August 16, Monday to Saturday at 7.30pm, and also Tuesday and Saturday at 3pm. For details go to southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/productions/brixton-calling

"The play is flattering, and there's a real hope that it will do well," Parkes concludes. "There's even talk of it being moved into the West End – even to Broadway, apparently." **DL**

TOP: JADRANKA KRSTESKA/REDFERNS

SLY STONE

March 15, 1943 – June 9, 2025

Pioneering psychedelic soul legend Sly Stone has died at the age of 82. The news was confirmed in a statement from his family. "After a prolonged battle with COPD [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease] and other underlying health issues, Sly passed away peacefully, surrounded by his three children, his closest friend and his extended family," the statement reads. "While we mourn his absence, we take solace in knowing that his extraordinary musical legacy will continue to resonate and inspire for generations to come.

"Sly was a monumental figure, a groundbreaking innovator, and a true pioneer who redefined the landscape of pop, funk, and rock music. His iconic songs have left an indelible mark on the world, and his influence remains undeniable. In a testament to his enduring creative spirit, Sly recently completed the screenplay for his life story, a project we are eager to share with the world in due course, which follows a memoir published in 2024."

Born Sylvester Stewart in Denton, Texas, in 1943, he grew up in a strongly religious environment, his father a deacon and mother singing and playing guitar at a local church.

Stone formed the group Sly & The Family Stone in 1966. Arguably the first truly interracial major rock act, they mixed rock, gospel, funk, pop, jazz and psychedelia into a heavy-duty mix that was as influential as it was innovative. Hits such as *Dance To The Music, Everyday People, Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin), I Want to Take You Higher, Family Affair* and *If You Want Me To Stay*, and the full-length albums made by Sly & The Family Stone and also Sly as a solo artist, including *Stand!, There's A Riot Goin' On, Fresh* and *Small Talk*, would be an inspiration to more than one generation of musicians.

> **"Thanks to Sly Stone, when I joined Purple I added a swagger that wasn't there before."**
>
> **Glenn Hughes**

"The big turning point for me was when I first went over to America with my band Trapeze during the very early seventies," bassist/vocalist Glenn Hughes told *Classic Rock*. "I turned on the radio and heard Sly & The Family Stone. The likes of Stevie Wonder, Otis Redding and Donnie Hathaway had influenced me vocally, but Sly Stone's music had a deeper resonance. Especially on [fifth album] *There's A Riot Goin' On*. *Thank You For Takin' To Me Africa, Family Affair*… songs like that. It sounded superhuman to me.

"When Sly sang he used two or three different voices, which influenced the way I started to sing, from real deep down to kinda screamy – that was just me. Well, it was going to be me," Hughes continued.

"When you play [Deep Purple's album] *Stormbringer* and you listen to *You Can't Do It Right, Hold On* and *Love Don't Mean A Thing*, the way Ritchie [Blackmore] played, it's funky. The way Ritchie hooked in with me, Paicey [Ian Paice] and Lordy [Jon Lord], that's some funky stuff. We didn't use the word 'funk' then because that might've offended some rock fans. But it's the whole core of who I am. Thanks to Sly Stone, when I joined Purple I added a swagger that wasn't there before. I feel good about that."

"We used to listen to Sly & The Family Stone on a reel-to-reel, which we had before we had a turntable," Guns N' Roses bassist Duff McKagan told us. "Greatest Hits came out in about 1970, and all of that different instrumentation and all those fucking great backbeats were like magic to me. I was just a kid!"

Gov't Mule's Warren Haynes: "All the music I grew up listening to was soul music: Otis Redding, Wilson Pickett, Sam & Dave, James Brown. Eventually, when my elder brother got *Stand!*, that started building a bridge to rock'n'roll for me. When I got a guitar in 1972 I would spend hours listening to records like this, trying to figure out what they were playing.

"When Sly came along, he brought us something fresh and powerful that couldn't be labelled," Haynes continued. "He changed everything."

On stage Sly & The Family Stone were phenomenal, and appearances at both 1967's Monterey Pop and Woodstock two years later – the latter spot widely considered to be among the finest of this now-legendary weekend – brought them instant credibility. But by the mid-70s a litany of cancelled shows, disrupted tours and terminal drug abuse – an erratic Stone was battling both addiction and mental health issues – had rendered the band all but unemployable. There was also considerable tension within the Family Stone line-up, especially between Sly and Larry Graham. It was even alleged that the bassist hired a hitman to 'take out' his boss.

"We went to San Francisco to do some recording, and we were stuck in a hotel for ten days and never saw him," Jeff Beck once told *Classic Rock*. "Eventually we got into the studio and Sly saw Carmine's [Appice] drums and said: 'You can take half of that away, we don't need that.' Then he disappeared into a back room and never came out again."

The Family Stone crawled to a halt in early 1975.

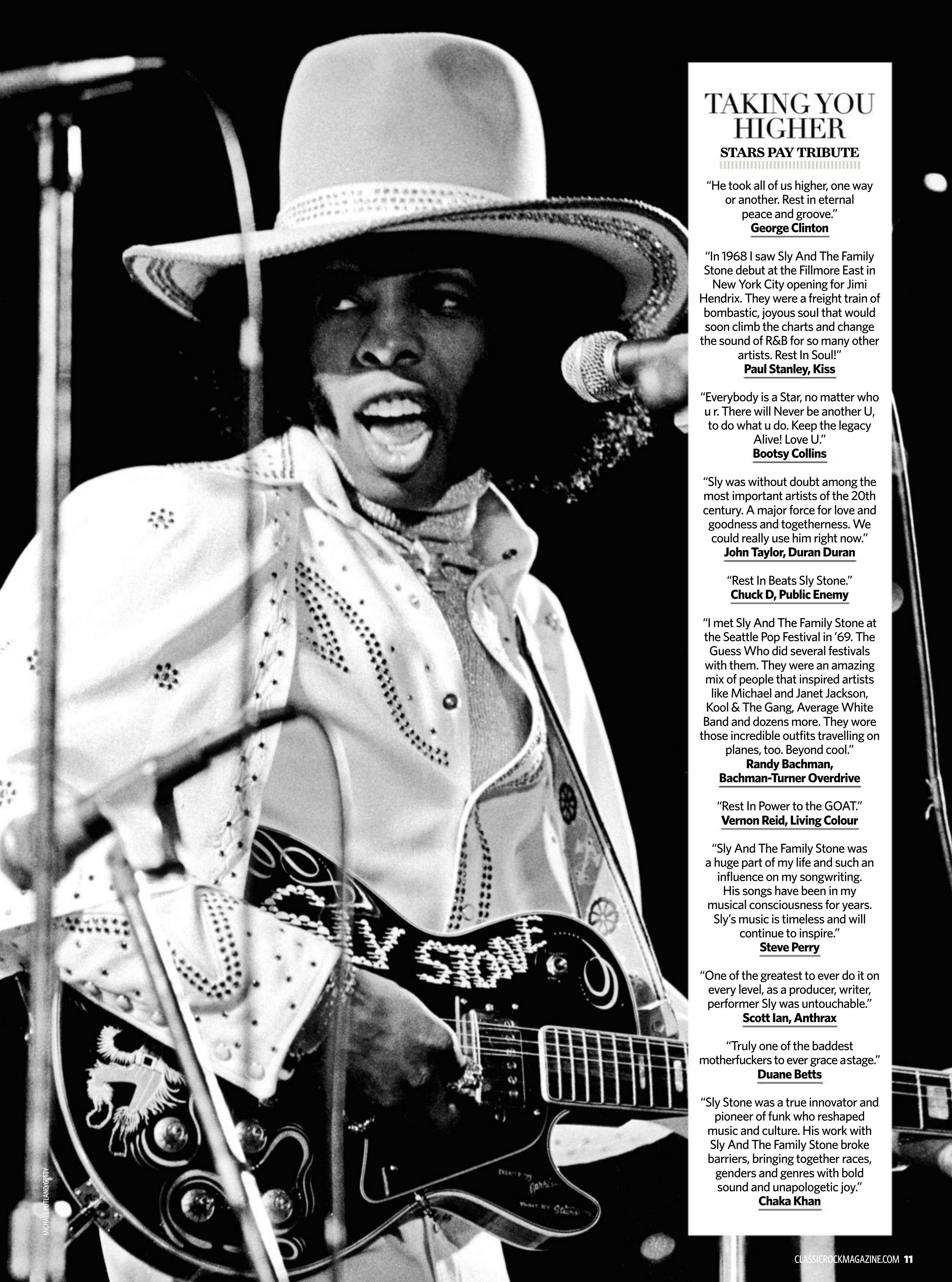
In 1993 they were inducted into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame. Perhaps inevitably, their induction didn't pass without drama. With all of the original members of the Family Stone in attendance, Stone delayed his arrival until everyone was at the podium, then arrived on stage to accept the award and deliver an extremely terse statement, and vanished as speedily as he'd appeared.

Multiple attempts to revive Stone's musical career faltered. His bizarre live shows in 2007, when he regularly arrived late on stage and left early, included occasional flashes of very real brilliance and suggested there was still gas in the tank. However, his most recent release, his 2011 solo album *I'm Back! Family & Friends*, included just three new songs.

The last interview that Stone gave was back in 2007, although he surprised many by publishing a memoir, *Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)*, in 2023. This year, *Sly Lives! (aka The Burden Of Black Genius)*, a film directed by Roots drummer and *Tonight Show* bandleader Questlove, was released to great acclaim. With Prince and Lenny Kravitz among those to have sung his praises, it was a film that he deserved.

Stone's death drew tributes from across the world of popular music, from artists saddened by the exit of a visionary. The passing of Brian Wilson 24 hours later only heightened the yawning sense of loss.

"Yesterday I listened to Sly Stone all day long, today I've been listening to Brian Wilson," said a visibly moved Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers in a video statement posted on X/Twitter. "Sly and Brian Wilson were two of our most deep and beautiful artists. From accounts that we are aware of, both were troubled. The cruelty of the world was a lot for them to bear, as it is for all of us now, but they were able to take all of that [negative] energy and turn it into light. That's a profound and important thing. I'm grateful to both of them for changing my life and giving me hope, for making me feel like I can belong somewhere. Building a bridge and shining a light is the only way." **FL/DL**



MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

TAKING YOU HIGHER

STARS PAY TRIBUTE

"He took all of us higher, one way or another. Rest in eternal peace and groove."
George Clinton

"In 1968 I saw Sly And The Family Stone debut at the Fillmore East in New York City opening for Jimi Hendrix. They were a freight train of bombastic, joyous soul that would soon climb the charts and change the sound of R&B for so many other artists. Rest In Soul!"
Paul Stanley, Kiss

"Everybody is a Star, no matter who u r. There will Never be another U, to do what u do. Keep the legacy Alive! Love U."
Bootsy Collins

"Sly was without doubt among the most important artists of the 20th century. A major force for love and goodness and togetherness. We could really use him right now."
John Taylor, Duran Duran

"Rest In Beats Sly Stone."
Chuck D, Public Enemy

"I met Sly And The Family Stone at the Seattle Pop Festival in '69. The Guess Who did several festivals with them. They were an amazing mix of people that inspired artists like Michael and Janet Jackson, Kool & The Gang, Average White Band and dozens more. They wore those incredible outfits travelling on planes, too. Beyond cool."
Randy Bachman, Bachman-Turner Overdrive

"Rest In Power to the GOAT."
Vernon Reid, Living Colour

"Sly And The Family Stone was a huge part of my life and such an influence on my songwriting. His songs have been in my musical consciousness for years. Sly's music is timeless and will continue to inspire."
Steve Perry

"One of the greatest to ever do it on every level, as a producer, writer, performer Sly was untouchable."
Scott Ian, Anthrax

"Truly one of the baddest motherfuckers to ever grace a stage."
Duane Betts

"Sly Stone was a true innovator and pioneer of funk who reshaped music and culture. His work with Sly And The Family Stone broke barriers, bringing together races, genders and genres with bold sound and unapologetic joy."
Chaka Khan

RIP

Thank you...
and good night.

Terry Draper

September 22, 1951 – May 15, 2025

A founding member of the cult Canadian proggers Klaatu, drummer Terry Draper has died of leukaemia. He was 73. Draper was a co-writer of the band's biggest hit, *Calling Occupants Of Interplanetary Craft,* which was covered by The Carpenters. In Canada there was a bizarre rumour – which was encouraged by the record label they shared with The Beatles – that Klaatu's debut album, *3:47EST*, released in 1976, was actually the Fab Four recording under a different name.

Andrew Matheson

Died May 31, 2025

Canadian-born, British-based singer Andrew Matheson is best-remembered for his spell as the frontman with the cult proto-punk band the Hollywood Brats. After moving to London when he was 18, he co-founded the band in 1981. Despite being championed by Keith Moon, their self-titled debut album was not a success. His memoir *Sick On You: The Disastrous Story Of Britain's Great Lost Punk Band* was published in 2015, and four years later the band played a one-off reunion gig. Matheson's age and cause of death were not reported.

Patrick Walden

October 5, 1978 – June 20, 2025

Introduced to the world by Pete Doherty after his headline-making dismissal from The Libertines, Londoner Walden spent two years as the lead guitarist with Doherty's next group, Babyshambles, commencing in 2004. "We feel very fortunate to have known, loved and worked with Patrick and we ask for respect and privacy during these difficult times," said a statement attributed to Doherty and the current Babyshambles line-up after Walden died at the age of 46.

Douglas McCarthy

Died June 11, 2025

The frontman and lyricist of British industrial band Nitzer Ebb has died at the age of 58. Essex-born Douglas McCarthy was a founding member of the group, who began by hammering out beats on a metal bin they named 'John'. In later years Nitzer Ebb became a major influence on bands like Nine Inch Nails and Front Line Assembly. McCarthy stepped away from performing with Nitzer Ebb in 2024 due to suffering cirrhosis of the liver caused by what he said was "years of alcohol abuse".

WORDS DAVE LING

Colin Jerwood

Died June 2, 2025

Tributes have been paid to Colin Jerwood, the frontman of veteran anarcho-punk band Conflict, who has died at the age of 64 following a short illness. "We're very sorry to hear about the passing of our old friend," said a statement from GBH. A "shocked, stunned and devastated" Steve Ignorant from Crass added: "Colin and I always considered ourselves brothers. We came through so much hardship and laughter together. I shall miss him terribly."

Conflict were formed in Eltham, South London in 1981. Also sometimes known as Colin Conflict, Jerwood became a prominent figure on the punk scene. Committed vegans, anti-militarists, environmentalists and opponents of corporate nuclear arms and globalisation, Conflict were driven by a DIY attitude and a strong anti-fascism mindset, and set up their own label, Mortarhate Records, to provide an independent outlet for themselves and other artists speaking out against war, oppression and inequality. In April this year Conflict released *This Much Remains*, their first album in more than two decades, to widespread critical praise and had begun touring. After careful reflection by the remaining members, and in accordance with the wishes of Jerwood's children, Conflict will be honouring their already-confirmed live appearances in the UK and Europe into 2026 before a final show in London.

A statement said: "As you can imagine, we are struggling to find the words to describe how sad and upset we feel over the loss of our band member and dear friend." **DL**

Honest John Plain

April 12, 1952 – June 13, 2025

The guitarist with punks The Boys has passed away peacefully after a long illness. He was 73 years old.

Born John Splain in Leeds, Yorkshire, Honest John Plain appeared on all five of The Boys' studio albums, from their self-titled debut in 1977 to 2014's *Punk Rock Menopause*, their comeback after 34 years away. He also released a wealth of solo material and had ties to the likes of Ian Hunter on the 1995 album *Dirty Laundry*, Ronnie Wood (via The Dirty Strangers), The Crybabys, The Lurkers, The Yobs, Casino Steel, London SS, The Mannish Boys, The Last Rock 'N' Roll Band and The Landslide Ladies. He also played drums in an early incarnation of Generation X. His songs were covered by Hanoi Rocks and the Manic Street Preachers.

Plain will be remembered not only for his music, but also for his humility and an unswerving dedication to the punk scene and its ideals. Although he never became properly famous, his influence spread far and wide.

"John was an outstanding musician, songwriter and singer," said a statement from The Boys. "His world-class rhythm guitar was the backbone of The Boys sound. He will be greatly missed by all." **DL**

COLIN JERWOOD: GUY SMALLMAN/GETTY; HONEST JOHN PLAIN: WILL IRELAND

James Lowe

March 5, 1943 – May 22, 2025

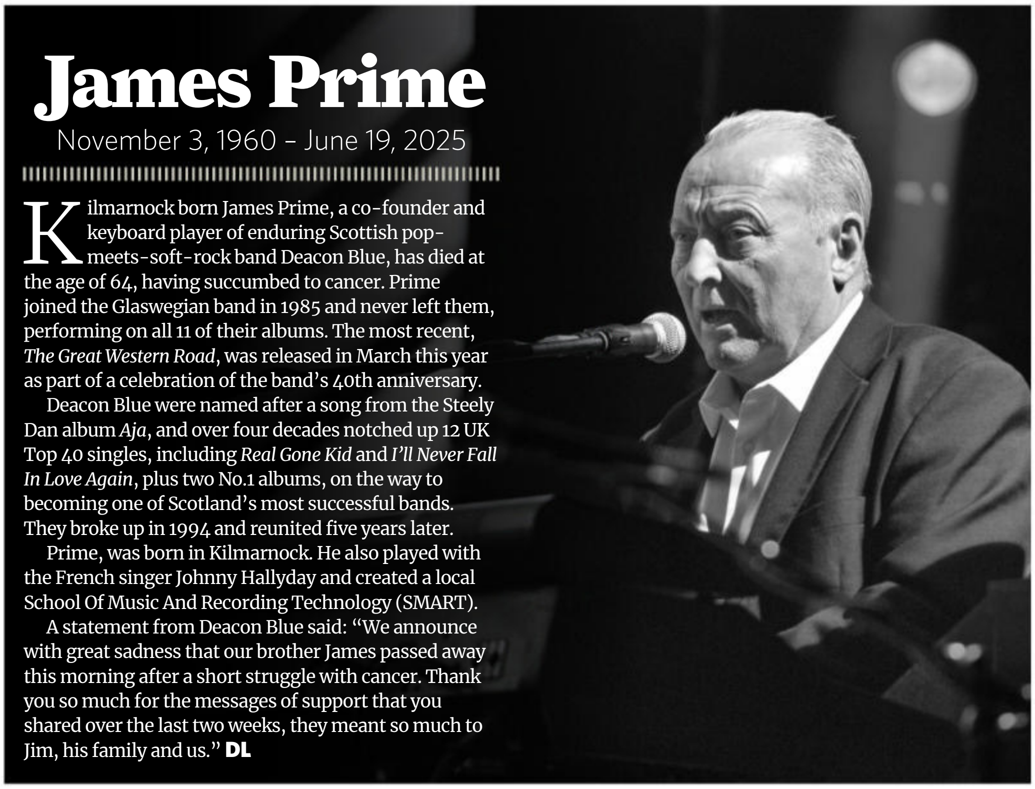
Born in San Luis Obispo, California, James Lowe was a guitarist and lead vocalist for the Electric Prunes, the psychedelic band known best for the hits *I Had Too Much to Dream (Last Night)* and *Get Me To The World On Time*. Lowe was 82 years old at the time of his passing, having suffered a cardiac arrest.

The Prunes were formed during the mid-60s, their unusual name suggested by Lowe. "It's not attractive, and there's nothing sexy about it, but people won't forget it," he reasoned, and with good cause.

After the band split up in 1968, Lowe became a recording engineer, working with Todd Rundgren and his pre-solo group The Nazz. At the start of the 70s he became an associate of Sparks, working on the band's self-titled debut as Rundgren's engineer and then stepping up to produce its 1972 follow-up *A Woofer In Tweeter's Clothing*. Neither record was successful, and Lowe quit the world of music for television.

Although the song *Kyrie Eleison*, from the Electric Prunes' third album *Mass In F Minor*, had been used in the smash hit 1969 film *Easy Rider*, Lowe distanced himself from their legacy for decades.

However, during the 1990s he reconnected with former bandmates Mark Tulin, Ken Williams and Michael Weakley to reunite the Prunes, who have released four albums in the current millennium, and despite the passing of Tulin in 2011 they continued to play live sporadically until Lowe's death. **DL**



James Prime

November 3, 1960 – June 19, 2025

Kilmarnock born James Prime, a co-founder and keyboard player of enduring Scottish pop-meets-soft-rock band Deacon Blue, has died at the age of 64, having succumbed to cancer. Prime joined the Glaswegian band in 1985 and never left them, performing on all 11 of their albums. The most recent, *The Great Western Road*, was released in March this year as part of a celebration of the band's 40th anniversary.

Deacon Blue were named after a song from the Steely Dan album *Aja*, and over four decades notched up 12 UK Top 40 singles, including *Real Gone Kid* and *I'll Never Fall In Love Again*, plus two No.1 albums, on the way to becoming one of Scotland's most successful bands. They broke up in 1994 and reunited five years later.

Prime, was born in Kilmarnock. He also played with the French singer Johnny Hallyday and created a local School Of Music And Recording Technology (SMART).

A statement from Deacon Blue said: "We announce with great sadness that our brother James passed away this morning after a short struggle with cancer. Thank you so much for the messages of support that you shared over the last two weeks, they meant so much to Jim, his family and us." **DL**

JAMES LOWE: SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY; JAMES PRIME: ROBERTO RICCIUTI/REDFERNS

David Briggs

March 16, 1943 – April 22, 2025

Born in Killen, Alabama, keyboard player, arranger, producer and writer David Briggs was a part of the celebrated 'Nashville Cats', a group of top-drawer musicians who worked on hundreds of records. Briggs worked in the studio and on stage with Elvis Presley, and his extensive CV features such huge names as BB King, Johny Cash, Alice Cooper, George Harrison, Tood Rundgren, JJ Cale and Kris Kristofferson. Briggs was 82 years old when he died of renal cancer.

Bob Andrews

June 20, 1949 – June 5, 2025

Yorkshireman Bob Andrews had a long career as a keyboard player, beginning with Brinsley Schwarz, the UK pub rockers whose line-up included Nick Lowe and titular guitarist Brinsley Schwarz, and continuing as a member of Graham Parker & Rumour. Andrews also worked as a producer for Carlene Carter, Tenpole Tudor and Jona Lewie. He was 75 when he died at home in New Mexico of unreported cause.

Peter Jones

Died June 6, 2025

The renowned Australian keyboard player who played on recordings for Little River Band, Crowded House, John Farnham, Morrissey, Sandie Shaw, Prefab Sprout and The Ferrets has died of an as-yet unreported cause, although he had been unwell for some time. Graeham Goble, a founder of LRB, wrote on social media: "Peter's peerless musicianship was at the very core of so many Little River Band recordings. Indeed, [our own] 'fifth Beatle' has left the building."

Chuck Profus

November 2, 1963 – June 4, 2025

Chuck Profus, a founding member and drummer of US thrash metal band Agent Steel has passed away at the age of 61. Profus co-founded Agent Steel with vocalist John Cyriis. He had two spells (1984–1988 and 1998–2002) with the group, who released albums including *Skeptics Apocalypse*, *Unstoppable Force* and, more recently, *Order Of The Illuminati*. He also played with the bands Black Reign, Obscene Gesture and Pontius Prophet.

Christine Hahn

Died May 28, 2025

Christine Hahn grew up in Ohio and Texas and went on to work in a variety of formats including music, painting, photography, video and print. She was a founding member of the West Berlin post-punk no-wave band Malaria!. Prior to that Hahn had played with future Sonic Youth singer and guitarist Kim Gordon and Stanton Miranda in CKM, and The Static alongside Glenn Branca and Barbara Ess. No details of her passing have been made available.

No Sleep Til... Kilmister Halls!

Lemmy could have a music venue named after him.

Following the recent unveiling of his statue, Lemmy could be honoured further with a dedicated music venue in his home town of Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent. Plans are afoot to build an 800-capacity live music club and name it Kilmister Halls. The space could potentially also include a café and a museum. It would replace the currently vacant Queen's Theatre, situated on the same street as the Lemmy statue. The Grade-II listed building first closed in 1998, reopened in 2003 then closed again in 2014.

Local artist Andy Edwards, who created the statue, reveals that discussions between IFK Legacy and Stoke-on-Trent City Council, who own Queen's Theatre, were "really positive".

"This city has a big musical heritage and we used to attract the best bands," he adds. "That's drifted away, and this [Kilmister Halls] would make a huge difference in getting that back again." **MM**

Vivian Campbell: celebration time.

Vivian Campbell Is Cancer-Free

"I'll buy my donor a beer or three," Leppard guitarist says.

Vivian Campbell has thanked the stem cell donor who helped him receive the all-clear from the cancer that he was diagnosed with in 2013. Now in complete remission from Hodgkin's lymphoma, Def Leppard's 62-year-old guitarist is fit and ready to join the band on their summer touring commitments, which include a UK stop at the Radio 2 In The Park open-air bash in Chelmsford, Essex on September 7.

Following an early, unsuccessful attempt, Campbell underwent a transplant last December. Four months later, a PET scan revealed the good news. "I'm a hundred per cent clean, completely in remission for the first time in 12 or 13 years," Campbell told US broadcaster Eddie Trunk. "And I'm obviously overjoyed. You couldn't ask for more than that."

Right now Campbell doesn't know the identity of his donor, only that he is a 21-year-old man, and plans to meet him in a couple of years when correspondence becomes allowed.

"I'm gonna buy him a beer – or two or three," he promises. "This was a life saver and I will express my gratitude." **DL**

NEWS

A 50th-anniversary reissue of **Deep Purple**'s classic live album *Made In Japan* arrives on August 15 – 53 years to the day since the first performance in Osaka. Available in multiple formats it has all three August 1972 shows that provided tracks for the original double album album, plus a 2025 Steven Wilson remix. There's also a 20th-anniversary edition of their album *Rapture Of The Deep*, released on August 29.

Asia will issue their first studio album in 12 years in 2026. The veteran proggers – still with co-founder and keyboard player Geoff Downes, plus guitarist John Mitchell, bassist/vocalist Harry Whitley and drummer Virgil Donati – have re-signed to their former label Frontiers for the follow-up to 2014's *Gravitas.*

Heart have been reunited with instruments stolen from a gig in Atlantic City. The band were left "heartbroken" when thieves walked away with a custom-built guitar owned by Nancy Wilson and Paul Moak's Gibson mandolin. After viewing CCTV footage, police tracked down a 57-year-old man and the items were returned.

The long-awaited Spinal Tap (pictured) sequel, ***Spinal Tap II: The End Continues***, now has an official release date of September 12. And yes, it's in Dobly.

The promo video for **Nirvana**'s 1991 hit *Smells Like Teen Spirit* has now been viewed more than two billion times on YouTube.

WELCOME BACK

Brent Cobb

For his new album the American country music veteran looked back to his youth and decided was time to rock.

As the title of Brent Cobb's new album suggests, it's not that he's never rocked, just that it's been a while. Born and raised in Georgia, the singer-songwriter is an accomplished voice in contemporary American country music, but alongside his long-time band The Fixin's, Cobb has recently rediscovered the heavy rock of his youth. *Ain't Rocked In A While* was worth the wait – some of the muscular, guitar-driven tracks wouldn't sound out of place on Black Sabbath's *Vol. 4*.

Was there a series of events that brought about the direction of your new album?

I knew I wanted to make this album with my live touring band because up to now I hadn't done that – and that's what comes naturally to them. I wanted to give everybody an album of reference so they'd know to expect more rock stuff at shows, and that it's not always the laid-back, good ol' southern songwriting. Then when I started writing, subconsciously these songs started to develop the more I remembered what I grew up with: AC/DC, Black Sabbath, ZZ Top. I forgot all these songs that laid the foundations for me as a songwriter.

> "I remembered what I grew up with: AC/DC, Black Sabbath..."

The track *Power Man* has a real ZZ Top vibe. What's that one about?

Definitely the state of the world, but you can magnify that down to anything, whether it's the music industry or people. You have friends for a long time, then somebody might get some success and forget how to be a friend. You realise you were a stepping stone because everybody is so hungry for power. I'll get into these philosophical stoner chats late at night, and we'll go: "Alright, evil exists. But why?" I can't fathom why people are so fucking cruel sometimes in this world, and the only thing I can ever think of is power.

You met your cousin Dave [Cobb, who has produced Rival Sons, Slash, Chris Stapleton and more] at a family funeral when you were a teenager.

His grandmother, my great-aunt, passed away and I was a pallbearer at her funeral. My grandmother gave him a six-song acoustic demo of mine after – she's shameless! Apparently he was reluctant to listen to his little cousin who he just met, but he did, and two days later him and Shooter Jennings called our house phone. They wanted to fly me to LA to work on an album [*No Place Left To Leave*, 2006], and that is how it all began.

What was it like getting back together to collaborate on your album *And Now, Let's Turn To Page...* [2022] years later?

He approaches production in the same way that I approach songwriting and we work really well together. I always hope to work with him, but I never think: "I've gotta make this album with Dave" – apart from that one, because of our family ties. I sent him a text saying: "So, when are we gonna make the gospel album?" All he responded with was: "Our family would be so proud".

You bookend your new album with a pair of tracks called *Beyond Measure*. Is there some symbolism at work?

Sometimes I take these things for granted. Then sometimes I don't and I completely cherish everything. Whenever I'm on that lonely road of wondering what it's all for, it can get dark. So the concept is: I'm out here alone on this island, I'm gonna go find some people, we're gonna rock, and I'm not the only one who feels this way. That's why it's bookended with the piano version at the top and then rock'n'roll at the end. **CL**

Ain't Rocked In A While is out now via Ol' Buddy/Thirty Tigers.

VIVIAN CAMPBELL: KEVIN NIXON; SPINAL TAP: AARON RAPOPORT/CORBIS VIA GETTY

NEIL HAINSWORTH/PRESS

> "I loved the sense of freedom, love and beautiful energy that emanates from that music."

★ HIGH HOPES

California Irish

The Answer's frontman on his new band inspired by 1960s folk/country rock.

You'll recognise Cormac Neeson as the frontman of Northern Irish bluesy hard rockers The Answer. Now his new band, California Irish, sees him donning hippie threads as he turns to the music he grew up on for inspiration.

"I remember listening to a cassette in our kitchen that was Joni Mitchell on one side, Cat Stevens on the other," says Neeson, explaining how he became obsessed with the sounds of 1960s Laurel Canyon from his parents' music collection. "That music ignited my imagination. Also watching documentaries about Woodstock, movies like *Easy Rider*; I loved the sense of freedom, love and beautiful energy that emanates from that music."

California Irish's debut album *The Mountains Are My Friends* is a rich, multi-layered, dreamy concoction of folk, bluesy rock, and Americana, with Hammond organ, multi-part harmonies á la CSNY, lap string guitars and even some psychedelic cowbell. Though it echoes the sounds of sixties Laurel Canyon, it has a soul that's all its own, cascading through a range of emotions from jaunty summery beats to passages of deep reflection. For Neeson, writing this music gave him the chance to stretch a different musical muscle than he does in The Answer, and to make the album that he always wanted to.

FOR FANS OF...

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young
Dallas Taylor & Greg Reeves

"The whole Neil Young connection has been an important influence on the way things have gone in the band," Cormac explains, of this pivotal inspiration. "The music those guys made together is the kind of thing we aspire to. I love the light and shade; they can rock hard when they want to, and also be delicate, atmospheric and insightful."

"On this album are the feelings I don't get to express when I'm writing a rock'n'roll record," says Neeson. "It feels like I'm living out the voices that have been in my head since I first listened to that cassette in our kitchen."

When Neeson started writing the music for what would become *The Mountains Are My Friends*, he thought it might become his second solo record – a follow-up to 2019's *White Feather*. But fate intervened, and found him the perfect musicians when he performed in a Neil Young-inspired theatre show.

"It was called 'Re-Harvest', with about 12 of us on stage doing *Harvest Moon* and *Harvest*," says Neeson. While performing with these musicians, he knew there was something special about them. "I asked them to come to Middle Farm Studios to record the album."

While recording *Mountains...* (as a full band in analogue, naturally) Neeson realised California Irish should be a fully-fledged, touring band. "The dynamic in the room was beautiful," he says. "I knew it had to be. I want people who come to see us to get the full band experience."

Mountains even feature on the album's cover, with Neeson sitting atop the Morne Mountains in County Down, watching the sunset. It's a tranquil, calming image, one that perfectly encapsulates the band's mantra of peace and love. Or, as Neeson says, "Siocháin agus grá!" **HMK**

The Mountains Are My Friends is out now.

"Roger will sack me next!"

Townshend weighs in on Zak Starkey's Who dismissal.

In a new interview with *The i Paper*, Pete Townshend gave his perspective of The Who's sacking, reinstatement and second sacking of drummer Zak Starkey, summing up the debacle: "It's been a mess".

Part of the problem, he feels, is that The Who hadn't played together in a while. Although it was reported that the firing of Starkey came from Daltrey alone, Townshend comments: "It's a decision Roger and I tried to make together, but it kind of got out of hand.

"I think Roger just got lost," Townshend continued. "Roger's finding it difficult. I have to be careful what I say about Roger because he gets angry if I say anything about him at all. He'll be sacking me next. But that's not to say that he sacked Zak."

Meanwhile, Daltrey has been awarded a Knighthood in the King's Birthday Honours list, in recognition of his services to music and charity (Daltrey was a patron of Teenage Cancer Trust for more than two decades). Among others honoured are Steve Winwood and 10cc's Graham Gouldman, who both received an MBE. **DL**

Jon Bon Jovi: vocal problems now behind him?

Bon Jovi Return To The Stage

Band play live again following JBJ's vocal cord surgery.

Bon Jovi have played their first full concert in more than three years. It's no secret that frontman Jon Bon Jovi has been battling severe vocal issues for quite a while, and some critics have even suggested that Bon Jovi should no longer tour.

Jon bravely confronted the situation head-on, revealing that he had been affected by a condition called vocal cord atrophy, caused by one of his vocal cords wasting away. Following reconstructive surgery in 2022, he hoped to make a return to the stage.

Finally, following some smaller, private shows, it finally happened. On June 14, 1,500 fans watched the group perform a 17-song, 95-minute set at the Marathon Music Works venue in Nashville. Those in attendance seemed satisfied by what they heard, which included golden oldies *Livin' On A Prayer, You Give Love A Bad Name, Born To Be My Baby* and a finale of *Blood On Blood*, plus *Legendary* from the band's most recent set, last year's *Forever*. **DL**

NEWS

The world's first **Ozzy Osbourne** exhibition is now open at the Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery. Charting his "journey from a working-class kid from Aston to becoming the world's most recognisable global rock legend", Working Class Hero runs until September 28.

Brent Hinds has launched a shock attack on his former bandmates in **Mastodon**, dissing them as "horrible humans". In a vicious outburst on social media the guitarist and singer, who spent 25 years as a member of the Atlanta-based prog-meets-metal behemoth, also referred to Mastodon as "a shit band".

Due to "unforeseen production issues", the release of the 50th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition of the **Genesis** album *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* has now been put back a second time, until late autumn.

The Lemonheads release *Love Chant*, their ninth studio album, on October 24 via Fire Records. Contributors on the record include J Mascis and Juliana Hatfield. It's their first collection of new material in almost 20 years.

Glenn Hughes (pictured) releases *Chosen*, his first new solo album in nine years, on September 5 via Frontiers. Joining the singer/bassist on the record are guitarist Soren Andersen, former King King keyboard player Bob Fridzema and drummer Ash Sheehan.

WELCOME BACK

Willie Nile

After four years, the New Yorker's new album was worth the wait. He also has a documentary on the way…

Willie Nile released his self-titled debut in 1980. A singer-songwriter with a rock'n'roll heart, he became the toast of NYC. After weathering more than a little record company drama and leaving the business for a decade, Nile returned. His new album, *The Great Yellow Light*, is a 10-track collection that includes anthemic rockers, passionate ballads and even an Irish singalong. It ranks with his debut, his 2006 masterpiece *Streets Of New York* and 2013's *American Ride* as one of his best records.

It's been almost four years since your last studio album. For you, that's a long time. Tell us about the past few years.

I put out nine albums in 12 years – from 2009 to 2021. *New York At Night* came out at the very beginning of Covid, so that was [early] 2020. Then the next year I put out *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. It came out in the summer of 2021.

Then in '22 I told the director [of his upcoming documentary]: "I won't make a record this year." I purposely didn't make a record in 2022 or '23 because I wanted to spend the time working on the documentary and be available for that.

> **"I like all kinds of music, but I'm a rocker at heart."**

What inspired the title track?

The title, *The Great Yellow Light*, is a reference to painter Vincent Van Gogh and some of the letters that he wrote to his brother Theo. For him, the great yellow light was inspiration. For me, the great yellow light represents awe and wonder. Whether it's sitting under an awning in the middle of a rainstorm, a child [being born], the ocean crashing – those moments of awe and wonder, whatever they may be.

Tell us a little about *An Irish Goodbye*.

An Irish goodbye, for those who don't know, is when you leave some event without saying goodbye – you kind of slip out the door. It's not meant to be offensive in any way, you just kind of leave early.

I wrote it about the big Irish goodbye: mortality. I have four children, and it was inspired by my daughter Mary. Last March she took her two children and her husband to Ireland. They had a great time. When she came back she was telling me about it on the phone. Later that evening, I was in my apartment and the phrase 'an Irish goodbye' came into my head. It stopped me in my tracks and I thought: "That's a song."

A week later I got to sing it for my father, who was a hundred and six at the time.

A couple of songs on the album were co-written with Frankie Lee, a talented guy who most people know nothing about.

Frankie Lee is one of the greatest songwriters alive. He's up there with Paul McCartney and Bob Dylan. I've been on and off with Frankie since 1992 and he's absolutely brilliant. He's very shy, very humble. He's retired now, he lives in New York, and I owe him a phone call.

For those of us who weren't in New York in the seventies, tell us a bit about what it was like. You weren't a punk rocker, but you were part of that scene.

Oh yeah. When I moved here, in the early seventies I always had the feeling there were holdover ghosts from the sixties. I like all kinds of music, but I'm a rocker at heart. I had one foot in CBGB and one foot in Folk City. I would tell my friends in the folk scene: "You gotta go to CBGB! There's these bands playin' original music! It's great!" Not one of them went. **DS**

The Great Yellow Light is out on now via River House Records.

JBJ: JASON KEMPIN/GETTY

The Damned

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SATURDAY APRIL 11TH

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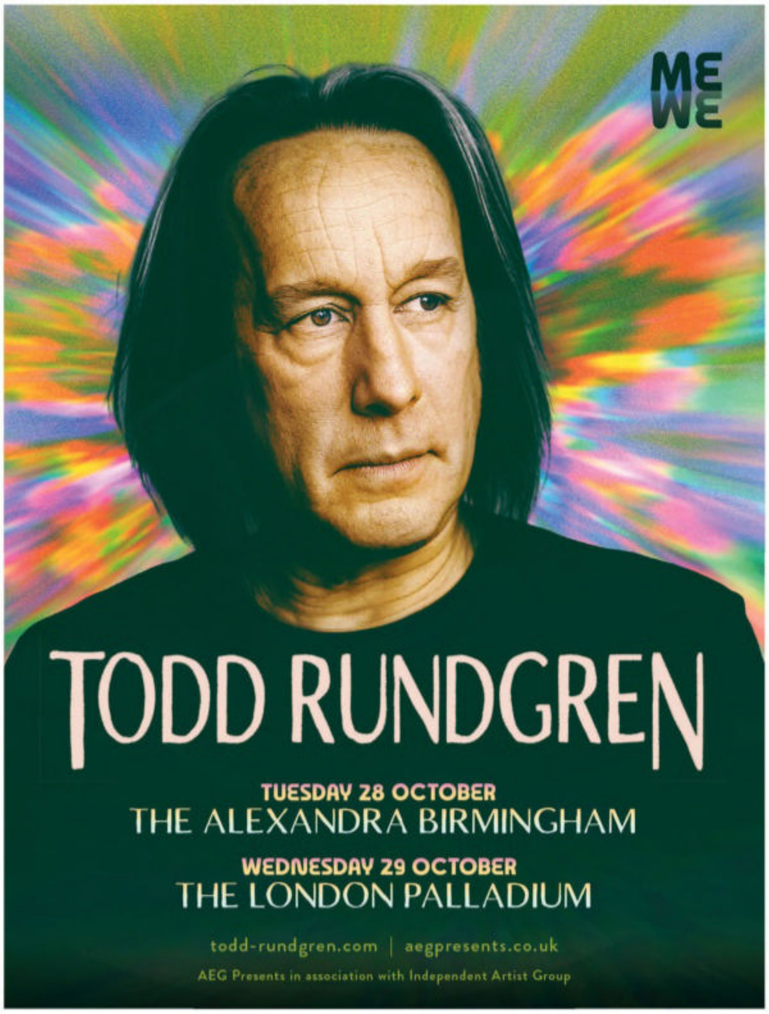

TODD RUNDGREN

TUESDAY 28 OCTOBER
THE ALEXANDRA BIRMINGHAM

WEDNESDAY 29 OCTOBER
THE LONDON PALLADIUM

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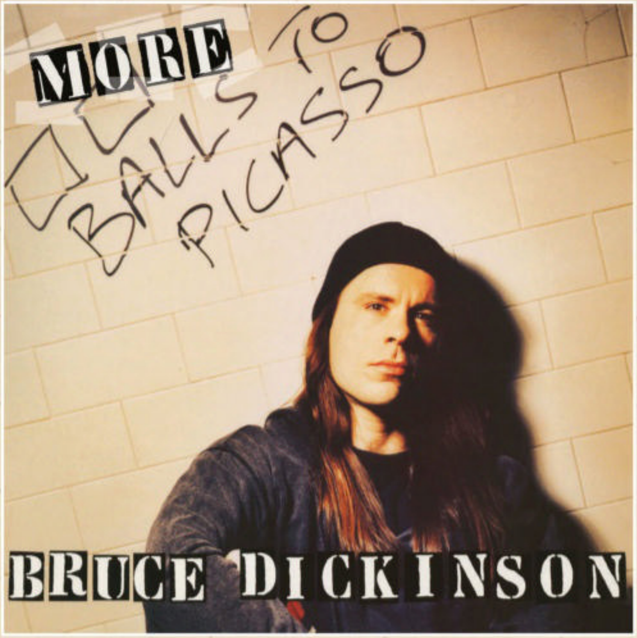

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> “We’re building organically and we want to win hearts and minds the old-fashioned way.”

★ HIGH HOPES

Young Gun Silver Fox

Don’t call it yacht rock – there’s no cheesy parody here, just accomplished songcraft.

Attention fans of swoon-inducing West Coast melodic rock: it’s time to meet your new favourite band. Well, maybe ‘new’ isn’t quite the word, but after five self-released albums, the reputation of Young Gun Silver Fox – that’s English singer/guitarist Andy Platts and US-born London-based multi-musician and producer Shawn Lee – is finally gaining some traction.

“There’s no hype about us. We’re about music, not marketing,” explains Shawn Lee, the titular Silver Fox. “We’re building organically and we want to win hearts and minds the old-fashioned way – by word of mouth. Fans that discover us like that are more committed than the casual ones.”

More fresh-faced and less hirsute than his partner, Platts (AKA the Young Gun) reveals that in previous guises both were “eaten up and spat out by the machine of the music business”. But despite their softly-softy approach, Young Gun Silver Fox now attract up to a thousand fans in the UK, plus “double or triple that in Holland” where the band are really taking off. In the United States, “five or six hundred” people will pay to see them in a club.

Since meeting up a decade ago, the pair have since supplied material for a host of other artists – including Take That – bonding over the process of composition.

“Both of us revere songcraft, the workmanship of making records,” Platts enthuses. “The 1970s were the absolute pinnacle of that. Somewhere along the way I think it became a little lost.”

The just-released *Pleasure* is the first record made with the pair together in the same room. “Our previous albums were consistent,” theorises Lee, “but working this way was empowering. Side one of the record was written in a couple of days and we hit our best shit right from the get-go. We knocked it right out of the park.”

The pair have it on good authority that their music is played regularly on the ELO tour bus, while iconic German film composer Hans Zimmer is also a bit of a fan. Comparisons to Steely Dan (see left) are, of course, the ultimate compliment.

YGSF don’t go out of their way to court so-called ‘yacht rock’-derived publicity – their biography prefers to describe their sound as “classic melodic pop with a funk ’n’ soul twist, drenched in sunshine”. Still, naturally the benefits of being pigeonholed can be convenient.

“I’m no Daryl Hall,” chuckles Lee, referencing the former Hall & Oates singer who famously detests the term. “We mess about with the imagery of palm trees and we wear Hawaiian shirts but there’s no parody in what we do, so we must be cautious. Those things are tongue-in-cheek, but despite having a sense of humour we are very serious about our music.” **DL**

Pleasure is available now. Look out for UK dates in October.

FOR FANS OF…

aja
STEELY DAN

“Our ultimate choice would be somewhere between Steely Dan’s *Aja* [released in 1977] and *Can’t Buy A Thrill* [1972],” considers Andy Platts of the records that have most inspired them as a band. “*Aja* is in the top ten of the greatest albums ever made,” he says. “In terms of songs, playing, production and vibe, it ticks all of the boxes.”

BRIAN WILSON

June 20, 1942 – June 11, 2025

As the visionary heart and soul of the Beach Boys, he created a mythic California soundtrack of sun-drenched, youthful innocence, and some timeless classics, all while battling personal demons, addiction and mental illness.

Words: **Bill DeMain**

'And when I go anywhere
I see love, I see love, I see love'

In a 1964 episode of *American Bandstand*, as Dick Clark is interviewing the Beach Boys, all fresh-faced and matching Pendleton stripes, he asks: "You have hit after hit. Who determines what will be done next?" Twenty-one-year-old Brian Wilson grins shyly at his bandmates and says: "Well, I guess I do, I don't know." Then in the next second he adds: "I write the songs and produce them, so I have a *lot* to say about it."

> **"I'm just a hard-working guy. I always get a little bit paranoid when I get a lot of attention."**
>
> **Brian Wilson**

That moment offers a glimpse of the two sides of Brian Wilson, the legendary leader of the Beach Boys, who died on June 11, 2025, a week shy of his 83rd birthday. He was one of the most creative, ambitious songwriters and producers of the rock era, responsible for an iconic West Coast sound that crested high with 36 Top 40 singles within 10 years, including *Surfin' USA, Surfer Girl, I Get Around, Wouldn't It Be Nice, California Girls, Good Vibrations* and *God Only Knows*. Yet despite the once-in-a-generation talent and confidence it took to achieve that, he had a humility that often toppled into self-doubt – along with a then-undiagnosed mental illness that eventually silenced him for years.

As someone who once acknowledged: "I'd earned over a million dollars by the time I was old enough to vote," Brian was well aware of his talent and accomplishments. But when I first interviewed him, in 1996, he was visibly uncomfortable with all the mythology around him. It probably didn't help that I was awestruck to be sitting across from the man who wrote *Surf's Up*. But he brushed off any mention of genius, likely haunted by the heightened expectations that come with it. "No, I'm just a hard-working guy," he told me. "And I always get a little bit paranoid when I get a lot of attention."

As his childhood friend and fellow Beach Boy Al Jardine said: "Brian was a humble musical giant. But he didn't want attention, and was only interested in making the best possible music."

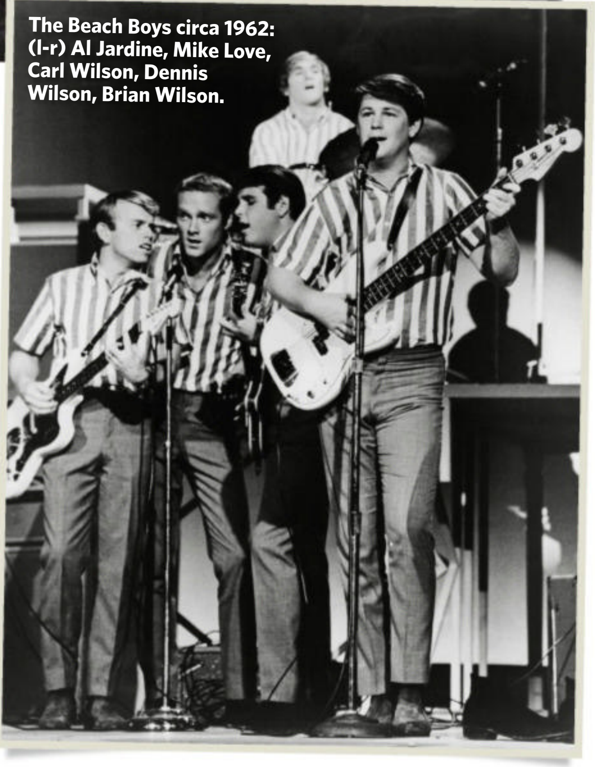
That music started in the early 1950s, in Hawthorne, California, a Los Angeles suburb 10 minutes from the beach. Brian and his younger brothers, Dennis and Carl, encouraged by their musician parents, began harmonising as boys. By high school Brian was serious about music. While his brothers were out playing baseball, he was in his room, playing piano, training his ear – literally, as he was born deaf in one ear – and transcribing records by George Gershwin and his favorite group, The Four Freshmen ("They taught me the most").

From the beginning, Brian possessed a multi-track mind. He could hear full-blown arrangements in his head. That gift was one even he didn't fully understand. When I asked about one of his most elaborate creations, *Good Vibrations*, he was characteristically Buddha-like. "I could *see the whole song in my mind* from the start," he said.

In another era, someone with such gifts – he also had perfect pitch - might have ended up becoming ➢

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

An "architect of sound": Brian Wilson directs from the control room during the recording of *Pet Sounds* in 1966.



The Beach Boys circa 1962: (l-r) Al Jardine, Mike Love, Carl Wilson, Dennis Wilson, Brian Wilson.

> **"Brian was a humble musical giant. But he didn't want attention, and was only interested in making the best possible music."**
>
> **Al Jardine**

a classical composer. But Brian was a teenager in the 1950s. He loved cars and girls, and he was crazy for the three-chord rock'n'roll of Chuck Berry that rhapsodised both. When you think about the early Beach Boys sound, it's really The Four Freshmen-meets-Chuck Berry, underpinned by touches of classical harmony. The missing lyrical ingredient that gave that unusual hybrid its commercial push was surfing. Famously, Brian himself didn't surf (he tried once, his brother Carl said, and was "terrible"). But Dennis, the most extrovert Wilson, did, and suggested to Brian that surfing might make for good song fodder.

In the early 60s the Beach Boys caught multiple waves that had them riding with the decade's leading hitmakers, from The Beatles to Motown. Thanks to Brian's work ethic, the band were prolific. It's startling to realise that before the much-lauded *Pet Sounds*, they released ten albums (nine went gold). Each was chock full of hits, whose fun, wholesome exteriors masked increasing levels of complexity and melancholy.

At every turn, Brian experimented with something new. He tweaked the opening line of *When I Wish Upon A Star* and crafted an equally poignant ballad out of it – *Surfer Girl*. He mixed shifting keys with jazzy harmonies on *The Warmth Of The Sun*. He combined inverted doo-wop chords and profound lyrical sadness on *In My Room*. The apex of that early period was the double-shot single *I Get Around* and *Don't Worry Baby*, intricate vocal collages with driving groove and revved-up guitar on one side, a lush, towering ballad on the other. One of Brian's favorites, *Don't Worry Baby* has a melody that if played by an orchestra could pass as a classical piece (indeed, you can hear Brian interpret it that way on his final release, *At My Piano*).

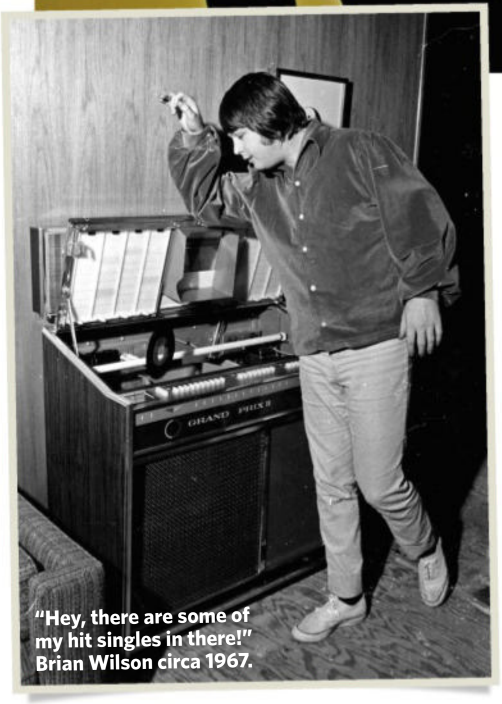
Really, when you dissect any of his songs, you find strange, wonderful alchemy. As a musician who has covered Beach Boys' songs, I stand in awe of their design (appropriately, Brian once described himself as a "song architect"). The melodies and chords rarely go where you think they might, yet somehow always make perfect sense. And for all their intricacy, they have universal appeal. Not an easy thing to do.

As those hits stacked up, so did the Beach Boys' troubles with the Wilsons' father, Murry, who was their manager. "That was difficult, because it's hard to chew your dad out," Carl said in *The Beach Boys: American Band.*

Murry Wilson, a frustrated songwriter and abusive alcoholic, loomed large in Brian's life, both terrorising him and inspiring him to want to excel. But Murry felt like he was owed for his boys' success. He'd got them signed to Capitol, and started a publishing company for Brian's songs. But as the band became more self-reliant, they bristled against his control (Brian wrote *I'm Bugged At My Old Man* in 1965). In the studio he would regularly browbeat Brian ("I'm a genius too!" he shouts in an infamous bootleg). Brian eventually had to fire him. Four years later, Murry, still bitter, secretly sold the publishing to all of Brian's early hits for a low-ball price of $700,000. That betrayal was devastating for Brian. In the

MAIN: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY; INSET: ALAMY

A fresh-faced Beach Boys in 1962 in Los Angeles, California. This image was used on the cover of *Surfin' USA*.



"Hey, there are some of my hit singles in there!" Brian Wilson circa 1967.

90s, after Murry died, Brian claimed fraud and sued to get his publishing back. He didn't win, but was awarded $25 million in damages, which was only a fraction of what the songs were worth.

Adding to the stress of the time, the album-tour-album treadmill wore on Brian. He was always an uneasy performer, and at the outset of their 1964 tour he collapsed in a nervous breakdown during a flight. Replaced in the touring band by Glen Campbell, then permanently by Bruce Johnston, Brian was free. Free to concentrate on his true passions: songwriting and producing. Free to follow his curiosity about everything from "metaphysics to spirituality". And free to experiment with LSD (his first trip resulted in *California Girls*).

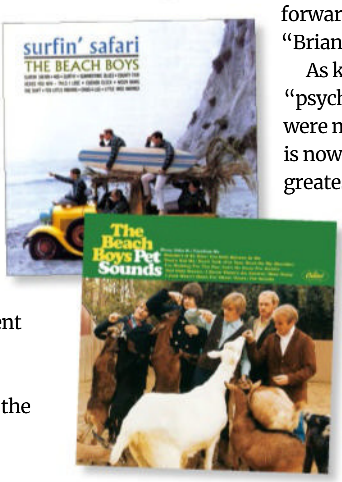
'Free' was the guiding word for the next two years.

Work on the *Pet Sounds* album began with prayer sessions, for music that would touch people's souls, and for a release that would outdo The Beatles' then-latest album *Rubber Soul* – a combination of "spirituality and competition", Brian said. While the Beach Boys toured, Brian and his new lyric partner Tony Asher wrote songs about loss, alienation and the end of innocence, then took them into the studio with top session collective the Wrecking Crew. "Each one of those guys added their own special touch," Brian told me. Dispensing with the guitar-bass-drums approach of previous Beach Boys albums, Brian spent months creating orchestral textures with "peaks and valleys".

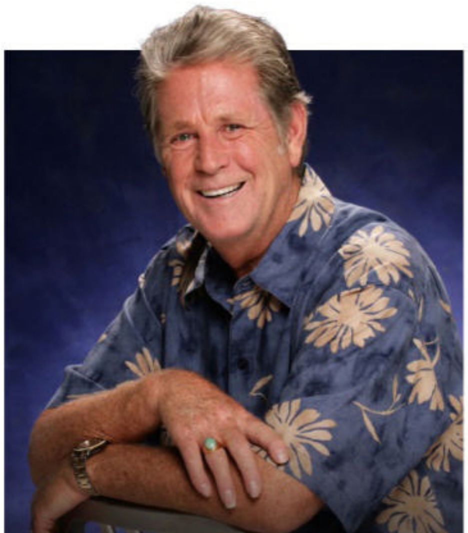
"He heard combinations of sounds that had never been heard before," said bassist Carol Kaye. "He would put things together like electric guitar, banjo, harpsichord and a harp, all playing the same line, so they'd just create this really strange sound," Tom Petty said. But as Tony Asher told me in 1998: "Even though the arrangements were advanced, Brian was always conscious of the commercial thing, this *absolute need to relate.*" Famously, his bandmates didn't relate.

Returning from the road to hear the tracks, their reaction was not what Brian hoped for. Although Bruce Johnston called it "a great leap forward," Mike Love dismissed it as "Brian's ego music".

As knocks to Brian's "psychodelicate" self-esteem go, there were more ahead. Although *Pet Sounds* is now rightly hailed as one of the greatest albums ever, with songs such as *Caroline, No*, *Wouldn't It Be Nice* and *God Only Knows*, it was seen then as a misstep. And for Brian, it was soon one-upped by The Beatles' *Revolver*. So he dug in further, with *Good Vibrations*. Inspired by his mum's comment about how dogs can pick up vibrations ▷



MAIN: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY; INSET: ALAMY; TOP: HARRY LANGDON/GETTY



GOOD VIBRATIONS

STARS PAY TRIBUTE

"Brian Wilson was the most musically inventive voice in all of pop, with an otherworldly ear for harmony. He was also the visionary leader of America's greatest band, The Beach Boys. If there'd been no Beach Boys, there would have been no *Racing In The Street*. Listen to *Summer's Gone* from The Beach Boys' last album *That's Why God Made The Radio* and weep. Farewell, Maestro. Nothing but love and a lasting debt from all of us on E Street."
Bruce Springsteen

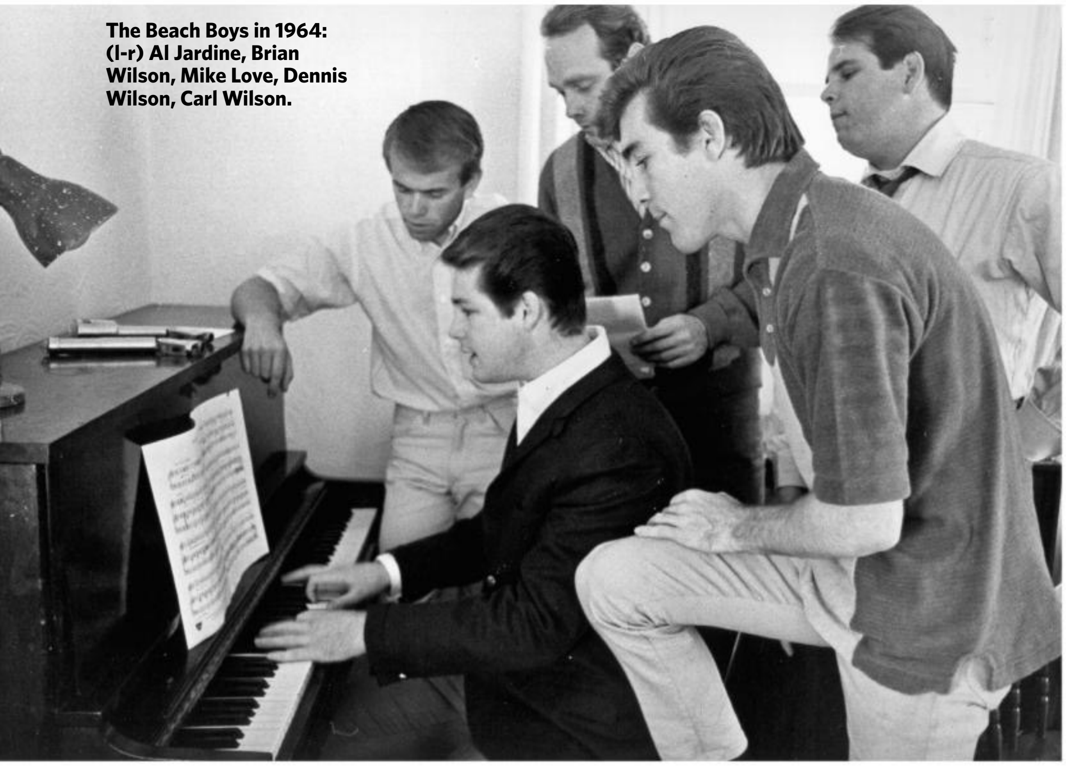
"Heard the sad news today and thought about all the years I've been listening to him and admiring his genius. Rest in peace dear Brian."
Bob Dylan

"The notes he heard in his head and passed to us were simple and brilliant at the same time. How we will continue without Brian Wilson, *God Only Knows*. Thank you, Brian."
Paul McCartney

"Brian was the biggest influence on my songwriting ever; he was a musical genius and revolutionary. He changed the goalposts when it came to writing songs and shaped music for ever. A true giant."
Elton John

"Today the world lost a genius, and I lost a cousin by blood and my partner in music. Brian wasn't just the heart of The Beach Boys – he was the soul of our sound. From the first time we sang together as kids in my living room, I knew there was something otherworldly in him. Brian changed the course of music for ever."
Mike Love

"My friend, my classmate, my football teammate, my Beach Boy bandmate and my brother in spirit, I will always feel blessed that you were in our lives for as long as you were."
Al Jardine



The Beach Boys in 1964: (l-r) Al Jardine, Brian Wilson, Mike Love, Dennis Wilson, Carl Wilson.

from people, this 'pocket symphony', a stunning feat of imagination and compositional intensity, took seven months, several studios and $75,000 (unheard of then) to complete. The mosaic approach that joined together all of Brian's songwriting obsessions – rock'n'roll, Phil Spector, classical, gospel, avant garde (the theremin!) – remains a landmark in modern music, much imitated, rarely equalled.

"The success of *Good Vibrations* inspired me to keep moving in that direction," Brian said. And *SMiLE* took the mosaic approach to the next level.

With another outside lyricist, Van Dyke Parks, the concept was a multi-movement American travelogue. Brian called it "a teenage symphony to God". Parks called it "collaborative heaven", saying: "Brian wanted to drop the surfboard and progress." Maestro Leonard Bernstein recognised one of the duo's first songs together, *Surf's Up*, as an "historic revolution". Reflecting the era, there were a lot of drugs in the mix, but Parks says they never interfered with their "extremely focused and athletic" work habits.

Meanwhile, Brian converted his house into 'fun rooms'. His grand piano sat in a giant sandbox (which gave birth to *Heroes And Villains*). An adjoining room became an Arabian tent with cushions and hookahs and velvet floors. Another room had nothing but tumbling mats, to encourage physical fitness. In the studio, Brian exerted total control – conducting, producing, driving the players to new heights (listening to him on the talkback to the players, there's always a mix of his excitement and impatience to hear his arrangements gel). He had musicians wear fire helmets to perform *Mrs. O'Leary's Cow*, the fire section of the elements suite.

Call it eccentricity, but it was more a reflection of his childlike sense of play. (The same spirit that inspired the album's title would see him opening his own West Hollywood health food store, The Radiant Radish, shortly after.) But the label's impatience for cars-and-girls hits and the group's resistance to experimentation (Mike Love said: "Don't fuck with the formula!") became too much. "The guys knew it was great music, but they didn't think it was right for them," Brian said diplomatically in the 2004 documentary *Beautiful Dreamer*.

"He heard combinations of sounds that had never been heard before."

Carol Kaye

"As he was just achieving the apex of his creative arc, he abandoned the project in the interest of social harmony," Van Dyke Parks said in the same doc. "But I could see he was heading for an emotional collapse."

Brian Wilson

Brian Wilson and Al Jardine in concert at the Etess Arena at Hard Rock Atlantic City, New Jersey. October 16, 2021.

For over three decades, *SMiLE* would remain the most famous unfinished album in rock history. When it was shelved, something in Brian died. His then-wife Marilyn told producer Don Was in 1995: "He was just torn down. And I think he felt guilty, like the other guys resented him for always being singled out as the genius. It became more and more that he would just stay in bed, and let the guys continue on their own in the studio."

The Beach Boys kept releasing albums, including *Smiley Smile*, a tepid salvage job of *SMiLE*. But as Al Jardine told me in 2023: "We were increasingly out of sync with the times. To put it in surfing terms, sometimes you catch the perfect wave and take it as far as you can go, other times you know you're going to get wiped out."

"No one could fill Brian's shoes," Bruce Johnston told me.

In 1968, Brian wrote a charming bossa tune titled *Busy Doing Nothing* (a highlight of the underrated *Friends* album), which was basically a list of directions on how to get to his house. But that title could describe his life during the 70s and 80s. He retreated from the world. At home in his bathrobe, long hair and beard, he gorged himself to 300 pounds, and floated in a haze of drugs and booze. He was an absentee Beach Boy, contributing occasional appearances to their albums, and an absentee dad to two daughters living under his roof, Wendy and Carnie (later of Wilson Phillips). Something needed to change.

In 1975, Brian's family enlisted the services of Dr. Eugene Landy, a celebrity therapist who'd treated notables such as Richard Harris and Alice Cooper. Sessions were on and off again. In 1977 he wrote and produced the cult classic *Love You* album. "Brian is back!" went the marketing push. But he wasn't really. Finally, in 1982, after being fired from the band, Brian went under full-time care of Landy, whose 24-hours-a-day "milieu therapy" meant that he and his assistants (later called "the surf nazis" by the Wilson family) controlled everything in Brian's life – diet, exercise, where he went, who he talked to. Landy drew up a list of "negative influences", which included pretty much all of Brian's family and friends. On top of Landy's $400,000 a year fee, he extended his Svengali reach into Brian's creative and financial life, becoming his producer, co-writer and manager.

While Landy may have restored Brian's physical health and saved him from becoming a drug casualty, the trade-off was that Brian effectively became a prisoner. In 1988 he recorded his first solo album, under Landy's watch. It was chaos in the studio, a revolving door of producers, high-profile guests such as Tom Petty and Jeff Lynne, and Landy's girlfriend writing new lyrics for Brian's songs. Although the ballad *Love And Mercy* became a fan favorite, it's a strangely sterile set of music, Brian imitating his former self. The album was overshadowed by the Beach Boys' surprise comeback hit, *Kokomo*.

In 1992, Brian's ghost-written memoir *Wouldn't It Be Nice* painted the former heroes in his

TOP: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY; BOTTOM: DONALD KRAVITZ/GETTY

Still picking up, and delivering, good vibrations: Brian Wilson in 1998.

life – namely the Beach Boys – as villains, while the true villain, Landy, got pages of praise.

The Wilson family finally intervened, and in 1989 Landy admitted that he'd been unlawfully administering drugs to Brian. He lost his medical license. In the 2021 documentary *Long Promised Road*, Brian looked back on the period, what he called "nine years of control" and said: "He made money off my name".

In his last years with Landy, he'd met Melinda Ledbetter, who eventually became his wife and "emotional support" for the final decades of his life. His resurgence in the 21st century still feels like a kind of miracle. With the Beach Boys now a memory (Dennis died in 1983, Carl in 1998), Brian surrounded himself with an amazing new band, dedicated to recreating his masterworks with note-for-note accuracy for the stage. The mental illness remained, as did the self-doubt. But with a loving infrastructure, and one of the most adoring fan bases of any modern artist, he flourished. I covered album shows for both *Pet Sounds* and *SMiLE*, and they remain two of the most moving and memorable concerts I've ever seen.

In 2006, Brian opened up to *Ability* magazine about his schizo-affective disorder, saying he'd been having "auditory hallucinations" in his head "all day, every day" for 40 years, since he was 25. "Every few minutes the voices say something derogatory to me, which discourages me a little bit, but I have to be strong enough to say to them: 'Hey, quit stalking me. Leave me alone.'" Brian said he still had negative thoughts, but "the positive is starting to win".

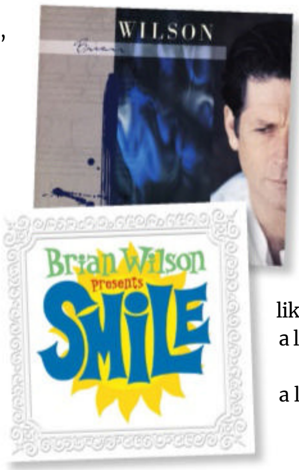
In 2021, he sold his publishing to Universal for $50 million, and in 2022 he played his final show. His wife Melinda passed away in 2024. A few months after, Brian was put into conservatorship because he'd been diagnosed with dementia.

After his death, the loving tributes poured in. Elton John called him "a musical genius and revolutionary". Bruce Springsteen hailed "the visionary leader of America's greatest band, the most musically inventive voice in all of pop, with an otherworldly ear for harmony". Paul McCartney, who has called *God Only Knows* his favorite song, said: "The notes he heard in his head and passed to us were simple and brilliant at the same time". Neil Young said: "He was like Mozart or Beethoven – the music will live forever". Van Dyke Parks said: "He moved mountains. He changed the language". A statement from the surviving Beach Boys said: "His unparalleled talent and unique spirit created the soundtrack of so many lives around the globe, including our own".

Although Brian Wilson was often defined by his fragility and struggles with mental health, it would be more appropriate to remember him for his incredible resilience and strength. Think of all the things he managed to survive and overcome. Even he joked about the possible connection between his last name Wilson and 'will power'. In the 2004 documentary *Beautiful Dreamer: The Story Of SMiLE*, you can witness that triumphant spirit, as he resurrects the work that nearly killed him 37 years previously. "He's the one who pulled himself out of the darkness into the sunlight," his wife Melinda said.

In my two encounters with him, Brian was quirky and a little uneasy. But completely without guile. Not that different from that kid on *American Bandstand.* When I asked if there was something he'd still like to do as a songwriter, he said: "I would like to write one song that imparts a love message."

Actually, Brian you wrote a lifetime's worth.



HARRY LANGDON/GETTY

"Rest in peace, Brian Wilson!"
Keith Richards

"'Genius' is a term used too often and too loosely. 'Tortured genius' even more so. Brian's astonishing output of musical brilliance will bring joy while it influences generations to come. Thank you Brian and Rest In Peace."
Paul Stanley

"Anyone with a musical bone in their body must be grateful for Brian Wilson's genius magical touch."
Mick Fleetwood

"What joy, what vision, what genius Brian brought into our lives. He set the musical course in a new direction. How lucky we are to have his beautiful sound to cherish for all time."
Graham Nash

"God bless Brian Wilson. Peace and love to all his family."
Ringo Starr

"Brian managed to write songs that took music into the realms of heaven. His harmonies and his melodies always contain so much joy. And he was such a lovely guy."
Roger Daltrey

"The writer of the most beautiful pop song in the world. *God Only Knows* was pure Brian Wilson. I can't think of anybody who is more gifted in so many ways musically as Brian."
Rick Springfield

"I remember being a teenager and hearing *Surfer Girl* for the first time on the radio. It made me pull my car over and simply listen to all these beautiful, unique sounds. Thank you for enriching my life."
Steve Perry

"*God Only Knows* what the world would be without HIM. Rest in music and poetry."
Nancy Wilson

"As a child the Beach Boys conjured up a beautiful world of sea, surf and positivity. As a man I grew to love his more challenging work like *Surf's Up*. I was very fortunate to meet him at the Albert Hall a few years ago. I'll never forget it."
Luke Morley, Thunder

"Brian was one of the greats. *God Only Knows* must be the greatest record of our time!"
Jim Lea, Slade

"Paul McCartney has often said that without *Pet Sounds* there'd be no *Sgt Pepper*, also that *God Only Knows* was among the most beautiful songs ever written. Rest in peace, reunited with your brothers Dennis and Carl."
Mike Portnoy, Dream Theater

THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

Steve Harley & Cockney Rebel

Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)

Written as a dig at the band members who quit because Harley wanted to do all the writing himself, it became a timeless hit.

Words: **Rob Hughes**

By the summer of 1974, Cockney Rebel were primed to become one of the biggest bands in Britain. Latest album *The Psychomodo* was tearing up the chart; two singles - *Judy Teen* and *Mr. Soft* - had made the Top 10; they'd embarked on a sell-out UK headline tour. Then the wheels came off. Following the final show, at Manchester's Hardrock in late July, band leader/frontman Steve Harley was confronted by the band's keyboard player Milton Reame-James.

"He came to me and said that we [the rest of the group] want to write songs for the next album," Harley told *Classic Rock* in 2004. "We were doing rather well with me in charge, I thought, so what are they worried about? We've all come out of obscurity into this. So I said: 'No, I'm not ready. I've already written the new album… I've got a million ideas of my own, my head's full of creative thinking.' Reame-James told me: 'We can write songs too'. I said: 'Well go and do that, then.' It was a mutiny, and he took with him two lovely young fellas, [violinist] John Crocker and bassist Paul Jeffreys."

Harley's argument was that he'd initially formed Cockney Rebel on the understanding that he was the boss and sole songwriter.

Suddenly left without a group, and fortified by a bottle of brandy, he began writing a vengeful riposte to his departed bandmates. He dug out the first song he ever performed, the unused *Laid In The Shade*, and rewrote the lyrics. Before too long he had the bones of *Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)*.

Assembling a fresh iteration of Cockney Rebel, Harley took it into the studio and introduced the song to co-producer Alan Parsons.

"I had no idea what it was all about," Parsons says today. "I presumed it was about Mae West and her famous 'Come up and see me' quote. But it's apparently about band number one."

Harley voiced his sense of betrayal in the opening verse: '*You've broken every code, and pulled the rebel to the floor.*' He went on to make a Biblical reference to Judas and his 30 pieces of silver, accusing his mutineers (Reame-James and Jeffreys joined Be-Bop Deluxe) of leaving Cockney Rebel for the lure of better money: '*You've spoilt the game… For only metal, what a bore.*'

The newly assembled line-up began recording *Make Me Smile* at Abbey Road in November '74, during sessions for Harley's third album as captain, *The Best Years Of Our Lives*. "That second band was very tight," recalls Parsons, who reprised his role from *The Psychomodo*. "I think Duncan Mackay on keyboards, in particular, made a big difference to us."

Relative newcomer Mackay was still recovering from a brief experience with the Baker Gurvitz Army – "Ginger Baker and Adrian Gurvitz were two of the most unpleasant people I'd ever met" – when he joined Cockney Rebel. The other new members Harley brought in were guitarist Jim Cregan (ex-Blossom Toes/Family) and bassist George Ford. Drummer Stuart Elliott was the only existing member to remain loyal to Harley.

Mackay was aware of Harley's reputation for being headstrong, but liked his attitude: "Here was a guy who totally believed in himself," he explains. "He was outrageous in his comments to the press, which meant they had lots to write about. So we got lots of publicity, which obviously helped with the whole shooting match. I quite admired Steve's arrogance in that he was going: 'Fuck you lot. This is what I'm doing, and you'd better get on board.'"

Harley's original vision for *Make Me Smile* was as a slow blues. Parsons felt it needed a little pep. "We kind of spruced it up a bit in the studio," he says. "I remember the vocal chorus in particular was very dirgy, so we got these girl backing singers and I said: 'C'mon, let's make it more rhythmic'. We had people like Tina Charles, Linda Lewis and Liza Strike, who sang on so many records. It just made everything bouncier."

Rebels with a cause: (l-r) George Ford, Jim Cregan, Steve Harley, Stuart Elliott, Duncan Mackay.

WATFORD/MIRRORPIX/MIRRORPIX VIA GETTY IMAGES

Mackay added an inspired intro using ascending notes, and Cregan delivered a remarkable acoustic guitar break. With its dramatic stop-start punctuation and Harley's arch vocals giving way to an infectious chorus, *Make Me Smile* felt special to those involved. At the end of the session, EMI exec Bob Mercer popped into the studio, took one listen and declared simply: "Number one!"

"Everyone at the label, and Steve and the band, all thought it would be a hit," says Parsons. "We all felt pretty good about it."

And so it proved. *Make Me Smile (Come Up And See Me)* topped the UK singles chart in February 1975.

REBEL ROUSER
Make Me Smile has enjoyed a busy afterlife. As well as its inclusion in films including *The Full Monty* (Robert Carlyle, pictured), *Velvet Goldmine* and *Saving Grace*, it's been used in ads for M&S, Carlsberg, Furniture Village and - no doubt due to its *'come up and see me'* - Viagra Connect. The song has also inspired a vast number of cover versions, including by Suzi Quatro, Erasure, Duran Duran and Thunder. Harley's favourite was by The Wedding Present, who took it into the Top 30 in 1990. "Only The Wedding Present have done it differently," he told Jon Kutner and Spencer Leigh, authors of *1000 UK No.1 Hits*. "They did a punk version and made it kick. They understood the venom in the lyrics."

MOVIESTORE/SHUTTERSTOCK

"We were in LA – I think it might've been a tour with The Kinks – when we found out," says Mackay. "We all jumped into the hotel swimming pool fully clothed. We didn't exactly get off the plane home and go straight to do *Top Of The Pops*, but it was pretty close. It was a fabulous end to what was going on at that moment in time."

Parsons was on a skiing holiday in Austria when he heard the news. "*Make Me Smile* actually took over at number one from Pilot's *January*, which I'd also produced. I was hugely chuffed by that. I've never had two consecutive number ones since then. We unashamedly drank champagne in a club all night."

Make Me Smile went on to sell more than million copies and appear on many film soundtracks. It effectively served as Harley's pension right up until his death from cancer in March 2024. "It's phenomenal," he told *Classic Rock*. "I wish I had ten of them. It's huge over most of the world. I hear it everywhere I go."

For Mackay, however, it's a double-sided memory. Cregan quit Cockney Rebel in 1976. Less than a year later, the band had dissolved altogether, leaving Harley to once again cast around for replacements.

"It makes me feel good that people still love *Make Me Smile*," Mackay says. "But we were writing half the stuff. In the end there's no recognition of your contributions to those songs, which made Jim and I both go elsewhere. He went on to play with Rod Stewart, and I left and worked with 10cc and Kate Bush. So it was a bit short-sighted, because what Steve had then was the perfect Cockney Rebel." ●

The Best Years Of Our Lives: 50th Anniversary Edition is out now.

"I admired Steve's arrogance in that he was going: 'F★★k you lot. This is what I'm doing, and you'd better get on board'."

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
January 1975

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.1,
US No.96

PERSONNEL
Steve Harley
Vocals
Jim Cregan
Guitar
Duncan Mackay
Keyboards
George Ford
Bass
Stuart Elliott
Drums
Tina Charles,
Martin Jay,
Yvonne Keeley,
Linda Lewis,
Liza Strike
Backing vocals

WRITTEN BY
Steve Harley

PRODUCED BY
Steve Harley
& Alan Parsons

LABEL
EMI

Volbeat

Singer/guitarist Michael Poulsen on life, death, loss, evil, spirituality, choosing music over boxing, the new album, goats...

Words: **Dave Everley**

If Volbeat's ninth album, *God Of Angels Trust*, is anything to go by, then Michael Poulsen is obsessed with goats. Not only does the album title spell out 'GOAT', but one of the animals features on the album and appears in a title of one of its songs. Volbeat's singer, guitarist and chief songwriter Poulsen, laughs off the suggestion. "No, I don't have any goats at home," he insists. "But maybe I should." References to bearded bovidae aside, the album continues the Metallica-approved Danes' bolshy fusion of metal, punk and old-fashioned rock'n'roll.

Volbeat's last album, *Servant Of The Mind*, was released in 2021. That's the longest gap between the band's records. How come?
We pretty much took a sabbatical year. I had to have a throat operation, which went really good, and I had to take time to recover from that. Then I went on the road with my other band, Asinhell, playing some old-school death metal. So when it came to getting back to work with Volbeat, it was just so inspired. It felt like we were coming full circle and starting all over again.

There's a song on the album called *In The Barn Of The Goat Giving Birth To Satan's Spawn In A Dying World Of Doom*. Were you going for the most heavy metal title in history?
Ha, no! That's just how my brain works. When it came to working on this album, I was so inspired. I said to Kaspar [Boye Larsen, bassist] and Jon [Larsen, drummer]: "Wouldn't it be interesting if we didn't overthink things and throw the rules away and feel like we're starting over again.' So with that song, there's no big chorus. It's [fist-pumping voice]: '*In the barn! Of the goat! Giving birth to Satan's spawn!*' People were like: "Are you serious?" I was shooting from the hip.

So what's the fascination with goats?
There's little hidden messages in there. If you listen to the opening song, *Devils Are Awake*, that's pretty much what the title and the cover are all about. We put a lot of trust in regulations and rules and religious directions, just to see them manipulated and broken by the people who create them. All evil has been created by human beings, and they seem to come wearing a mask. It's me putting question marks over a lot of how the world works today.

So 'G.O.A.T.' isn't you saying you're the Greatest Of All Time?
Ha, no, it's definitely not that.

Your late father was a huge guiding light for you, and the song *Time Will Heal* seems to be inspired by him. How difficult is it to sing about him these days?
It's definitely becoming more and more easy. It was a huge struggle in the beginning. When I wrote *Fallen* [the 2009 Volbeat song inspired by the death of Poulsen's father], it was tough for me to go up on stage and not break down and start crying. Now I use it as something positive. With time, you get experience in dealing with loss . It's not great but it's part of life and you have to accept it. And the last thing my father would want to see if he's sitting up there in the sky or wherever is his boy walking around being miserable because of it.

***Acid Rain* seems to be about an out-of-body experience. What inspired that?**
Volbeat is not a religious band – we're not Christian, we're not satanic, we're not anything. But I'm a spiritual man and I believe in the spiritual world. I believe that there's more to life than what we see walking around us. *Acid Rain* is me imagining trying to connect with the spirit of my father, my own spirit leaving the body to fly to wherever it needs to fly, to connect with his spirit. And also ask him a lot of questions: "Did you see the tunnel and the light? Did you have all these flashbacks from your life?" It's about connecting with my dad and putting out some questions.

You're a father yourself. How did that change you? Did it mellow you out?
Absolutely. Life becomes such a different thing when you have kids. I'm not saying that's the only way you can enjoy life, but it's made my life such a beautiful thing. Everybody needs to put their ego away, and that's what it does to me. My job is to be a good dad and support everything they want now and in the future.

Have you sat them down and played them Metallica and Mercyful Fate yet?
Ha, no. What my kids listen to, I have to listen to. If we're in the car and they want kids' music, that's what we put on. I'm fine with that. Sometimes if we're out my wife will put on the radio and I'll say: "Can we just listen to the kids' music, cos it's better than what's on the radio."

You're a fan of boxing, and you even trained with Danish former world champion Mikkel Kessler. Do you still do it?
I don't. There was a time back in the day where I asked myself: "Should I start boxing, or playing music?" But I knew there wouldn't be time for both. I wanted to dedicate myself to one craft. And I thought I'd probably stand more chance of getting away with being drunk playing music than I would boxing.

As a teenager you were a death metal fan. Would that kid like Volbeat, or would he think you're too commercial?
I have no idea. But since it's the same person, I think he'd probably say it was pretty interesting.

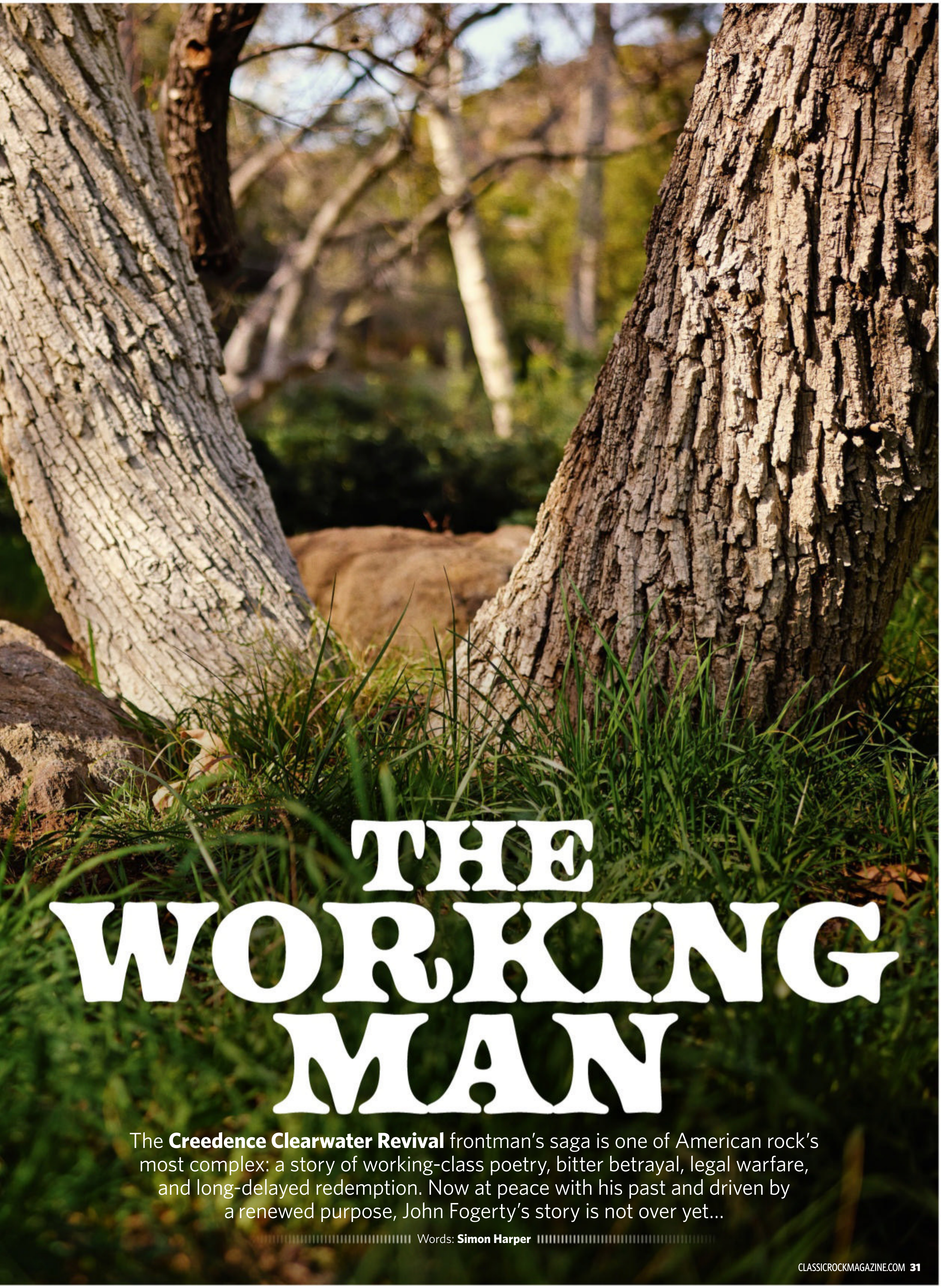
What would a Michael Poulsen solo album sound like? Country music? Rockabilly? A kids' record?
Ha! A lot of people have asked me about that, but I don't really plan to do one. I have the Asinhell record [2023's *Impii Hora*], because death metal was something I started out playing and it was something I missed. But a solo album? I don't know. Maybe I'll make an album with all the goats I'm about to buy. ●

God Of Angels Trust is out now via Vertigo/Universal.

ELVIS AARON PRESLEY

> "I believe that there's more to life than what we see walking around us."

DAVID McLISTER/PRESS



THE WORKING MAN

The **Creedence Clearwater Revival** frontman's saga is one of American rock's most complex: a story of working-class poetry, bitter betrayal, legal warfare, and long-delayed redemption. Now at peace with his past and driven by a renewed purpose, John Fogerty's story is not over yet…

Words: **Simon Harper**

Rocky mountain high: Creedence in 1968 (l-r): Doug Clifford, Tom Fogerty, Stu Cook, John Fogerty.

PICTORIAL PRESS / ALAMY

For more than half a century, John Fogerty lived in a surreal and crippling paradox: he was one of rock's most distinctive and influential songwriters, yet he didn't own the rights to the music that made him famous.

The voice behind *Proud Mary, Bad Moon Rising, Have You Ever Seen The Rain* and *Fortunate Son* had effectively been locked out of his own legacy. Decades of litigation, bitterness, and silence followed, casting a shadow over one of the most extraordinary songwriting streaks of last century.

It all began with Creedence Clearwater Revival, the band Fogerty formed with his older brother Tom and two high school friends, Stu Cook and Doug Clifford. Emerging from the Bay Area's fertile early 60s scene, Creedence evolved from a tight, hard working local act into one of America's defining rock bands. Between 1968 and 1972, CCR released an astonishing seven studio albums packed with sharp, rootsy anthems that spoke directly to a restless generation. In 1969 alone, they released three albums and had four Top 10 singles in the US. For a time, they were outselling The Beatles.

> **"I think there was some sense that I'd been screwed, and that things weren't right and, you know, I'm not an awful fella."**

And then, almost as quickly, it was over. Internal rifts and contract disputes tore the band apart. Fogerty cut ties with Fantasy Records and its owner Saul Zaentz, refusing to play his Creedence songs live for years in protest of a deal signed when they were too young to know better. "Stu was supposed show the contract to his father, who was an entertainment attorney," Fogerty tells *Classic Rock*, "but over the years, I've kinda wondered if Stu ever really showed it to him."

At loggerheads with Zaentz, whose ruthless control of CCR's music crushed his spirit, Fogerty entered a long and painful period of creative exile. There was no reunion. His brother died in 1990. By then, Fogerty had begun the slow process of rebuilding as a solo artist, but the battle over the songs continued for decades.

Now, in a remarkable late career victory, Fogerty has finally regained control of his own catalogue. Decades of legal wrangling were brought to an end after Concord purchased Fantasy in 2004, and eventually made good on returning his rights in 2023, freeing him at last to reclaim his own creations.

Legacy, his latest album, is both a personal and artistic reckoning. It sees him revisiting and re-recording a hand-picked selection of the songs that once defined a decade of revolt and rebellion. But this time, the performances carry a fresh resonance. That's because he's joined in the studio by his sons Shane and Tyler, turning *Legacy* into something more than just a covers album. Executive produced by his wife, Julie, it's a family project, a spiritual reclamation, and a joyful assertion of ownership.

Staying mostly true to the timeless originals, there's a relaxed warmth and a sense of triumph in these new recordings. They're not just remakes; they're affirmations. You get the sense this isn't just about preserving Creedence's legacy; it's about redefining it, extending it into the future with family at its core.

As we speak to Fogerty, he reflects on the highs and lows of his long career: from the blue collar boom of CCR to the acrimonious implosion that followed; from watching others profit from his songs to the hard-won moment of taking them back. Now 80, he remains clear-eyed, good-humoured, and still, utterly passionate about music. At last, he gets to tell his story his way.

After waiting over 50 years to regain the rights to the Creedence catalogue, why did you decide to re-record the songs rather than package up a new greatest hits?

I think some of it was realising I'm never gonna be offered a chance to own the masters – none of us in the band will ever get that opportunity; they'll be owned by a company, and another company, and it all gets very corporate. So, approaching 80 years old, it just seemed like, 'Gee, what would I like to do? Well, I'd like to have some recordings that I actually own so that I get to control their destiny,' you might say.

There was a lot of impetus from my dear wife, who kinda envisioned the idea of me having an album made up of re-records. It gave me a project that was actually pretty difficult. It wasn't like falling off a log.

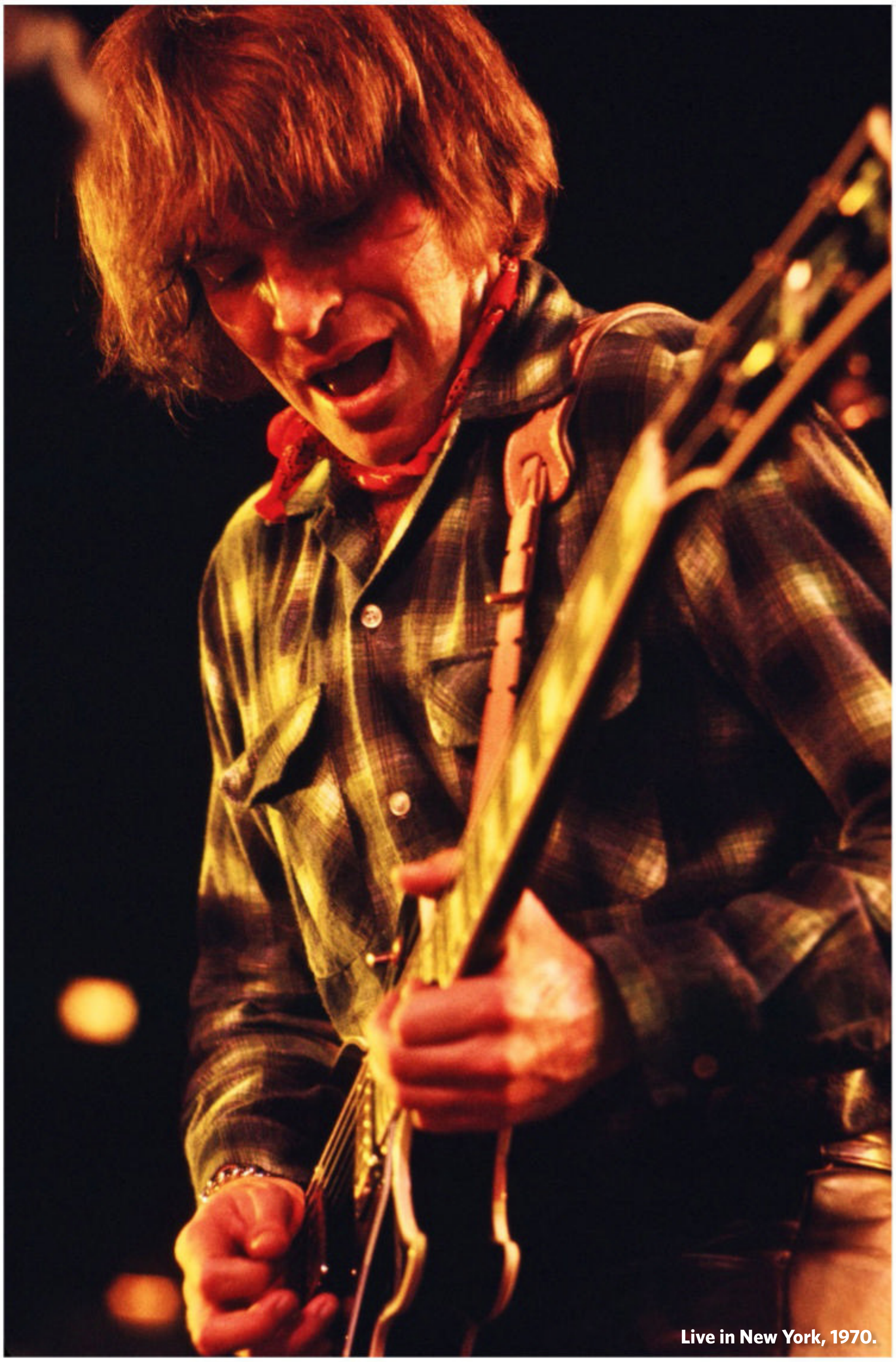
What were the challenges?

To do it good. To do it well. I realised, 'Wow, I'm not gonna stand for it being mediocre'. So it meant a lot more work, a lot more involvement, a lot more understanding of it.

You named this record *Legacy*. Is that word about closure for you, or is it still a living thing, something you're shaping even now?
Julie came up with that word, and I think it's perfect. These songs are my legacy, you know? Even though the story has been very convoluted, and half the time when people would talk to me I would look angry or confused or aggressive, it was because there were many feelings I wasn't able to put a smooth face on. And rightfully so. I mean, when a guy is tricked out of his artistic creations, I think there should be loud noises going off in the world to say, 'No, this is wrong!' I'm the one that created all this music, and I don't know that the world always understood that. And now that I've finally gotten a lot of the ownership – at least, certainly, the publishing ownership of my own songs - declaring that it's a legacy is very important, because these are, in fact, my creations. I was alone when I wrote these songs – there was nobody there except me – so I think it's a perfect word that explains what these songs mean to me.

CCR has always been in the bloodstream of American music, but lately it seems like there's an even bigger resurgence. *Rolling Stone* called you "the biggest band in America" in 2024. Why do you think your songs are resonating again so strongly now?
I do believe that I wrote some pretty good songs. You can't stand at the base of a mountain and try to take credit for the mountain, but I do believe that I did a very good job of crafting and editing and compressing my songs to where there was very little dead weight. They were mostly pretty pure and valid songs. I think that has something to do with it. Certainly the fact that I'm running around creating a lot of noise by doing different things – for one, getting my publishing back. It became a really big story – there were over a billion views of that story, which astounded me. That means people were interested. I'm completely humbled by that. I think there was some sense that I'd been screwed, and that things weren't right and, you know, I'm not an awful fella – it seemed like I probably didn't deserve to have my songs stolen – and so people looked at it as I was kind of the underdog, and I was finally getting something wonderful happen. I think they were cheering that as perhaps the good guy finally winning. The Creedence music has never really gone away. I think *Chronicles* [CCR greatest hits collection] has been something like 14 consecutive years on the charts, I don't know. But I think the current resurgence has a lot to do with my own activity and visibility.

You've been active on social media and embracing those platforms to take your music to a wider audience. Do you credit your wife and kids for keeping you plugged in to what's going on?
Oh, very much so. Yeah, you know, you don't wanna become the old fuddy-duddy sitting on the couch and petting the family dog and nodding your head, 'That's nice'. But not having a clue what's going on in the world. It's fun. I look at social media as a fun means of communication and perhaps part of the wider awareness of my music in this modern era.


Live in New York, 1970.

WALTER IOOSS JR./GETTY IMAGES

It's great that you play with your kids on this album, because Creedence was a family band, too – your brother Tom was in the band. It almost gives the songs a deeper personal connection. Were there any emotional moments in the studio that took you by surprise?
Oh, I think that happened every day. Because the way I kind of explain it is in the beginning, of course, I was just a little boy that discovered music and realised that he loved music, and so I was going forward with the simple joy of a human being discovering what it was in the world that he loved to do, and so I just kept going forward with that, and lo and behold, it turned out that I was pretty good at it. So, not only did I love music, but it loved me back. I got to have this wonderful relationship. And then things soured; I had success, and the success led to a lot of human interaction that was not happy – it was very hard for me to understand, and in many ways it almost broke me, it was so disturbing. And having then met Julie, and we have our family, and having grown into this relationship and this commitment, life became very good again for me. And then, because of those wonderful feelings, finally being able to face music and have the interest and the energy or the stamina that it took to roll with the punches and the disappointments, and be willing to go into that again. And now, to find such joy with the music, to me, it's how it started, and now I am just so happy that things are this way. It's a great joy to be able to share making music with your family, and that sense of passing things on is just a wonderful emotion. It's why we become parents, I guess, but it's a beautiful thing.

Speaking of parents, your mother paved the way for your career by enrolling you in folk guitar lessons as a kid. It's easy to see a link between the social commentary of folk music and the songs

In harmony: CCR in the studio.

you've written. How influenced were you by the music of that era and what you heard at home?
I really am very grateful to my mom for doing that, for steering me or giving me the additional area of folk music that I got to learn from the inside, because she was so fascinated with folk music. I loved rock'n'roll, I loved Elvis, I loved *Rock Around The Clock*, and The Beatles when they came along, but my mom was so immersed in folk music. She loved Pete Seeger, and passed that on to me, and there were many more. She would take me to these folk festivals that were starting to get organised - especially after the song *Tom Dooley* became a big hit… I actually met Pete Seeger when I was 12 years old, and got to go to workshops and hear him explain and show movies about Leadbelly and other singers, so I got an additional musical education besides the one that I naturally gravitated to, that were sort of the sons of Elvis Presley, you might say.

> **"The hype of the Vietnam war and the spectre of being sent to the jungle and possibly dying was a very big deal."**

Fogerty met Cook and Clifford as a teenager in El Cerrito, a city just north of Berkeley, California. Calling themselves The Blue Velvets, they played local gigs and served as backing band for John's older brother, Tom, who had his own aspirations as a singer. After Tom joined full-time, by the mid-60s, the group's growing regional reputation led them to a deal with San Francisco jazz label, Fantasy Records. The label rebranded them The Golliwogs, a name the band openly despised, and under which they released a handful of singles between 1964 and 1967.

Though modest in chart terms, the material showed promise, and John, increasingly frustrated with the band's direction and the label's creative control, was beginning to hone his voice as a songwriter. The group's momentum was abruptly suspended when Fogerty and Clifford were drafted in 1966, but it was while stationed in the Army Reserve at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, that John wrote *Porterville,* a song that hinted at a more mature lyrical outlook, and which would shape the group's new, emerging identity.

***Porterville* is the earliest song to appear on *Legacy*. That song was a watershed for you in terms of subject matter – moving away from Beatle-esque pop lyrics. What did it mean to you that made you revisit it here, and what does it represent now?**
Well, I think because I was marching around and in a state of sort of delirium and meditation in discovering how to use my mind to position the thoughts into a story – rather than just rhyming cute little rock'n'roll phrases that I'd already heard on somebody else's record, these were storytelling, and that was kind of a new thing for me. Obviously I'd heard other people's stories, but to do it yourself from a story that's personal… *Porterville* has a little bit of autobiographical material in it, and then there's quite a bit of poetic licence, too. But I considered that my first song where I told a story and had a point of view. The first version of *Porterville* came out as The Golliwogs, as a single, and the recording didn't quite live up to the song. The song holds up, I just thought that the song was good enough and deserved to have a better recording.

After serving your six months, but still with the threat of being sent to Vietnam looming over you, you became even more determined to make a success in music. How did the experience shift your perspective on your purpose?
Boy, there's nothing like having something taken away to make you appreciate it, and I suppose what was taken away while you're in the army is you're not free, you're not self-determining. And so, when you get back home and you now have time to decide your own schedule, you also decide to be a little more careful what you spend your energy on, and that was really my determination. I decided, for one, 'Wow, I gotta get more organised about my songwriting,' because I'd always kinda done it haphazard - not really a specific approach - and so, literally, one of the things I did was I went and got a little notebook… I guess the idea in my mind was simply, 'Well, you've got to have a place where you write everything down so it's all in one place instead of being scattered all over on random pieces of paper all over the place'. So, I went and got a little notebook and decided that was going to be my little songwriting notebook, and that was a big change in my life.

That determination saw you step up to become lead singer. Tom would later concede, "I could sing, but John had a sound". When did you first realise you could make that thunderous sound with your voice?
Obviously I grew up being able to carry a tune – I could sing - but around 1964, I started actively trying to push myself to have a more rock'n'roll sort of aggressive voice. It didn't just come out of me naturally, I actually had to make an effort to push in that direction. I had gone up with some fellas to a place called Portland in Oregon, and we had a two-week job in a little club up there, and I was using the opportunity… I had a little reel-to-reel tape recorder, and I would record each set every night and then come back and listen to myself and try to determine how I could make my voice get a little more scratchy, a little more harsh, a little more growly… It was a conscious effort to make my voice sound the way I had thought it should sound.

You wrote *Proud Mary* on the day you received your honourable discharge from the army, which seems to be reflected in the song's themes of escapism and hope.
Yeah. It's a strange story behind the song that not many have as their motivation, I suppose. But, for me, the hype of the Vietnam war and the spectre of being sent to the jungle and possibly getting maimed or dying, getting relief from that was a very big deal. So, getting my honourable discharge, I ran right in the house and picked up my guitar, and the first line of Proud Mary is, *'Left a good job in the city/Working for the man every night and day'.* I mean, that's exactly it. I felt relieved and elevated that I was finally free.

In 1967, just before John's military service ended, the band finally ditched their distasteful name, and re-emerged as Creedence Clearwater Revival, releasing their self-titled debut the following year. The album featured a breakthrough cover of *Suzie Q*, which cracked the US Top 20, alongside originals like *Porterville* and *Walk On The Water*, and quickly laid the foundation for their signature swampy, stripped-back sound.

But despite this early success, not everyone was happy with how the band was evolving. Tom had been relegated to rhythm guitar, and John's growing control in the studio – writing, producing, mixing the songs – began to cause friction. By the time they entered the studio to make their second album, *Bayou Country*, the cracks were already beginning to show.

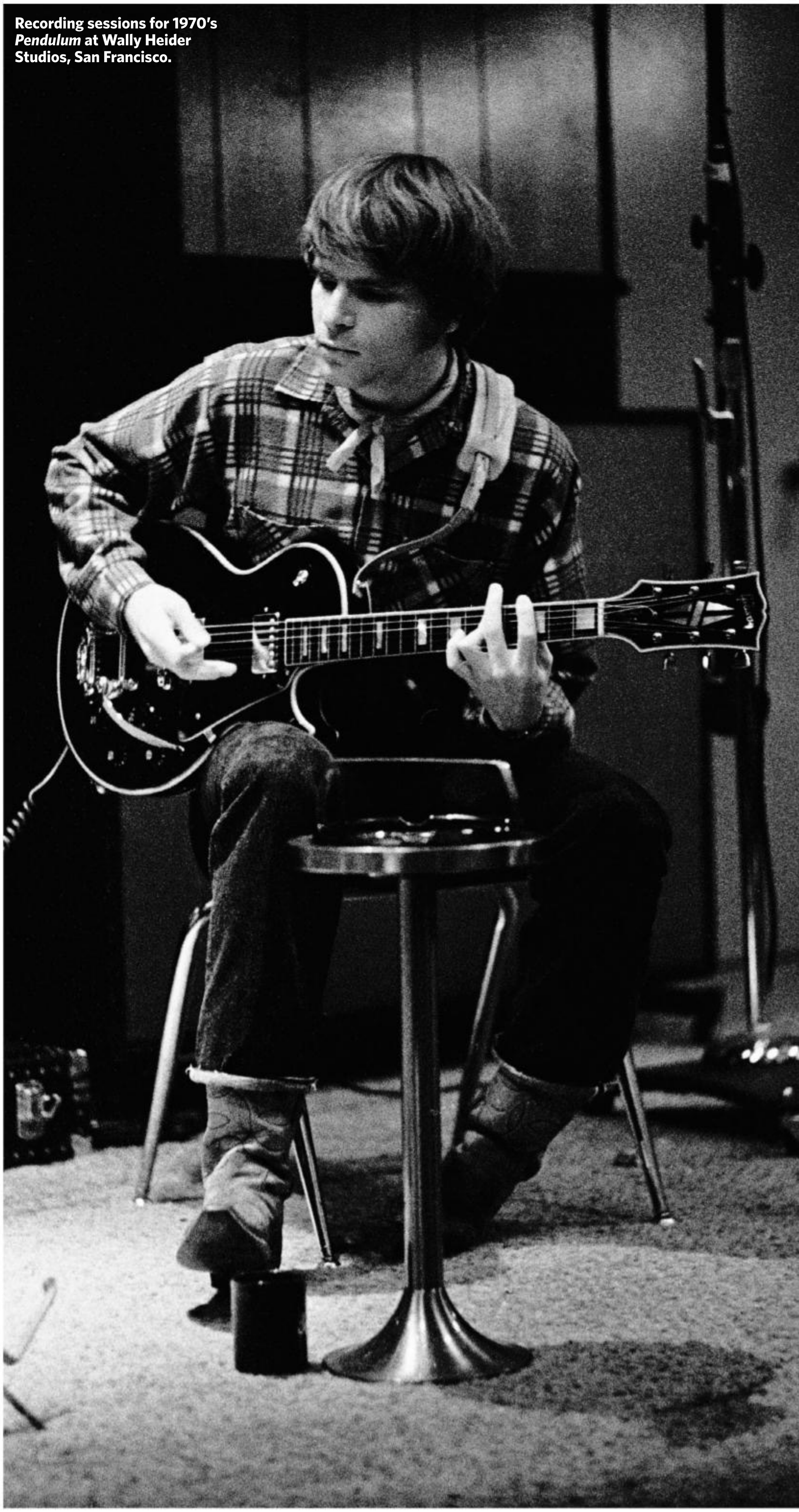
Given that you were delivering the goods that were propelling the group, what were their main points of contention so early on?
These are really kinda little things, but they're

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

such big things when you're 21-years-old and you're in a band, and the people get their feathers ruffled because they've been standing there making music with you casually or whatever for years and years, so suddenly, when one fella starts actually becoming very creative, well, everybody else thinks they can do that too. That's probably the biggest thing that goes wrong. By the way, that's not my responsibility, you know? I was having enough trouble just trying to help myself be creative, so it's not my fault that the drummer wasn't able to sing like me. But when people are young and they start yelling at each other, somehow it becomes my fault. 'Well, you're better than us and that's not fair. You should make us as good as you,' or something like that. It becomes kind of silly.

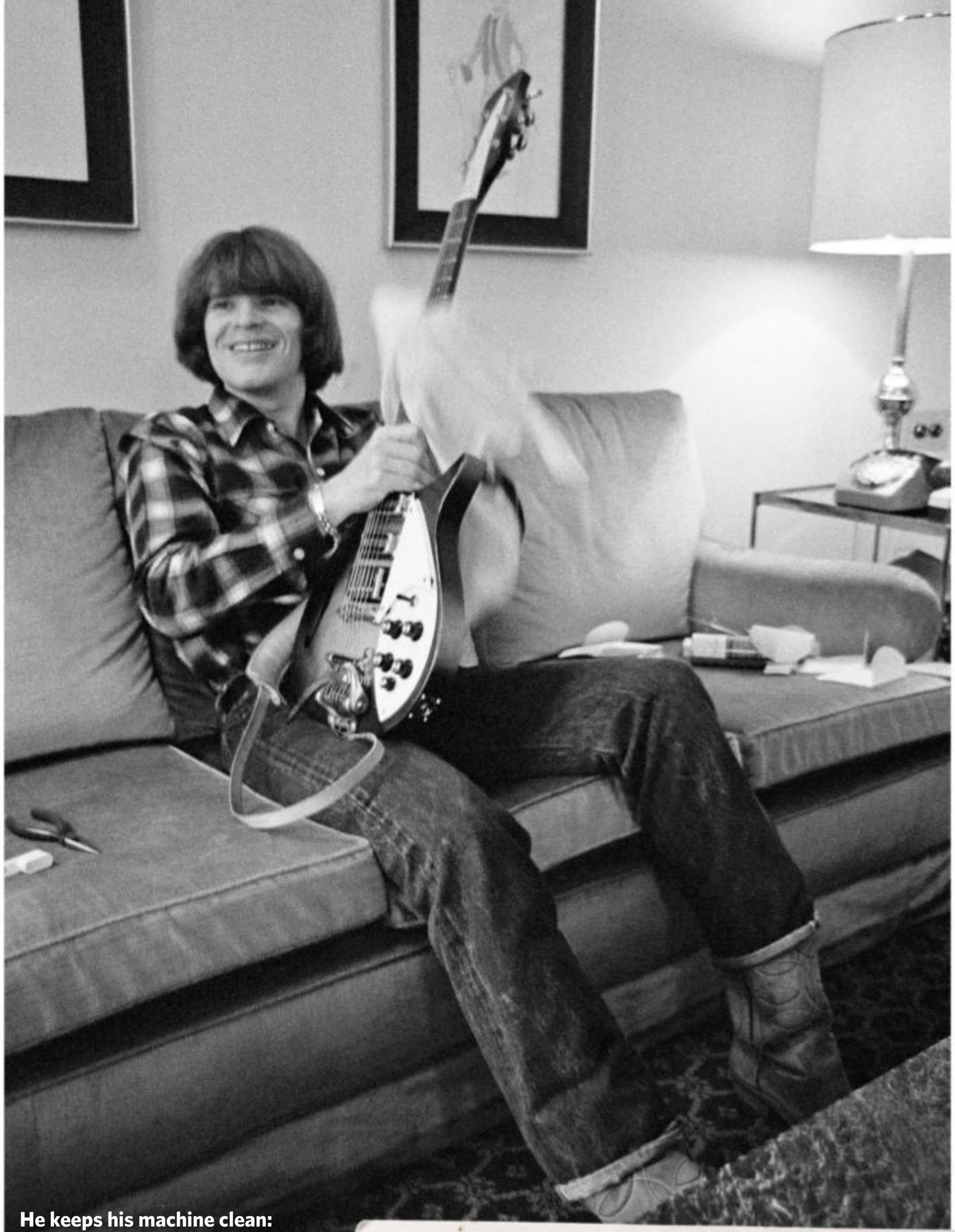
Things weren't much better between yourself and Fantasy. Saul Zaentz was boss of Fantasy now, having bought the label in 1967. Were there any signs of what trouble may come down the line with his personal relationship with you?
We'd had a relationship with Fantasy since 1964, when I had walked in the door and asked if they were interested in somebody that could sing and write songs. Saul was the sales rep. He really didn't have a say-so as far as the creative direction of that record company, that business, but we liked Saul. He seemed to be kinda more normal than a couple of the people that were running the label. They were jazzbos, right? They were really from the beatnik era, and we were just kids; we certainly didn't understand that. So when Saul took over and bought the company, we thought that was a very good thing. 'Oh, somebody that we understand is owning the label now.' I'm not privy to what's in Saul's mind, but you just find it fascinating that a person who's on the outside, buys a little label for a couple of hundred thousand dollars that's a jazz label, that's so far away from the mainstream of rock'n'roll that it's like being on Pluto, and then lucks into this thing where you've got a young man that can write songs and sing 'em, and also produce records. You would think he would go, 'Oh my goodness, I've discovered a golden goose! Wow! Let's make this the happiest thing we could ever do!' Instead, his instinct was to put that golden goose in prison so that the golden goose could never get out and go do something somewhere else. I mean, he would have had a wonderful career. Instead, what he did was he shut the whole thing down.

The music that you made has always connected with the people of America. There's a very working class theme to your music, and even in the way you dressed – plaid shirts and jeans. Was this something conscious you wanted to portray, or was that just your natural persona?
Yes, it was very unconscious. I think I was just trying to show up and be clean and do my job professionally – and I mean that with all straightforwardness. I just decided to wear certain clothes because I liked those clothes, and that was something I understood. I was not like David Bowie, or even Mick [Jagger], making fashion choices and that understood fashion. I'm not here to say I understood that world at all. I really didn't even care about that. I didn't think that was important. In fact, when fashion became important later in rock'n'roll, I thought it was ▷



Recording sessions for 1970's *Pendulum* at Wally Heider Studios, San Francisco.

ED CARAEFF / ICONIC IMAGES



He keeps his machine clean: Fogerty in London during a European tour, 1970.

a distraction. I didn't think it held a candle to the music. So, those things were just sort of natural. Even then, as you say, working class stance: all those words, all that point of view, came out of me, of course, because I was writing the songs, and that was something that I did think about. I had a very well developed sense of who I was and what I thought this music was for. In many ways like Pete Seeger or Woody Guthrie: the sense that this was from the common people. In other words, this was not about rich people, or people that owned a lot of stuff - or certainly politicians or anything like that. I was just kind of the everyman doing my job, so I wrote songs from that perspective.

It's interesting that you use the word 'job'. CCR's studio was called The Factory, so it's almost like you had a place to go to work and create a product to sell. To achieve the level of success that you had required a firm work ethic; you were known to be a perfectionist in the studio, and never let drugs interfere with performance. Were you laser focused on what you wanted to do, and how you wanted it to do it?

Very much so. Once I had written *Porterville* and had arranged the song *Suzie Q* in such a way that seemed to really work, it seemed like… I'm not gonna say I understood everything about it, but I certainly had a much clearer vision of how to go about things. Because that's what you're mostly doing before you have success; you're kinda poking around in the pond going, 'Gee, how does that guy do that? How does he get to be a success like that? What do you have to do to get there?' And you're trying to figure things out because you don't know, and obviously you don't have success, so once you start to have things working, you're trying to figure out how to keep doing those things, right? I became, at that point, manic about it. I started staying up very late in the evening – up until 4am every day, writing songs – because for me, I realised what was going to make me different than all the other people who were trying to be on the radio and have a band, was I needed to have more songs. I had actually made a commitment to myself; at the end of 1968, *Suzie Q* had been a hit, and I took stock of my situation and I said, 'Well, gee, we don't have a publicist, we don't have a manager, we're on a tiny little label, we don't have financial backing… I guess I'm just gonna have to do it with music'. Meaning, if I can create music and supply enough music, it will overcome not having those other ingredients that I thought somebody like The Beatles did have and I was lacking. So I just set about taking care of the thing I thought I could take care of by working really hard.

Despite the brewing tensions within the band, 1969 saw Creedence Clearwater Revival erupt into one of the most commercially successful acts in America. Their second album, *Bayou Country*, arrived in January, powered by the enduring swamp-rock anthem *Proud Mary*, which shot into the Top 10 and became their breakthrough hit.

What followed was a staggering burst of productivity: two more albums came that year – *Green River* and *Willy And The Poor Boys* – each stacked with hits like *Bad Moon Rising, Lodi, Down On The Corner* and the furious Vietnam-era protest, *Fortunate Son*. CCR were suddenly everywhere: on the radio, in the charts, and even on the Woodstock stage – although their set wasn't included in the original film or soundtrack, due to the band's displeasure with their after-midnight performance.

As 1970 rolled in, and with it their celebrated masterpiece *Cosmo's Factory*, while the hits kept coming for CCR, many of Fogerty's lyrics reflected something darker: a rising unease that seemed to mirror the turbulence of the times.

Bit tired now.

Like the folk songs that originally influenced you, your work became chronicles of American life at that time. *Bad Moon Rising* and *Run Through The Jungle* are really infused with this sense of foreboding; looking back, were there clear signposts signalling the death of the 60s? Were those times as fraught as those songs might suggest?

It wasn't like I was sitting around noticing those signposts. In other words, I think I was swimming in the stream like everyone else. Older, intellectual writers like Hunter S. Thompson, or people like that, would notice those things. I was just a kid of the times, you might say. But I sure loved the sense of foreboding. I just got a chill when you said that. It was like, 'Yeah, I need to do that again.' Having written a song like *Bad Moon Rising* at the time, I was really happy with myself. I hope I don't come off like a braggart or something, but it was a good song, and I really liked it. Later in life, of course, people could look back and see that

MAIN: MIKE RANDOLPH/PAUL POPPER/POPPERFOTO VIA GETTY; INSET: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

Creedence during the *Pendulum* recording sessions.

sense of foreboding and it makes me proud, but… I think I was more feeling it. You know, Nixon was in the White House, the Vietnam war was going on and all of that… That was where those senses came from.

If you wanted to do it again, just look at the sense of foreboding that's gripping America now. Ironically, the current President, likely unaware of the song's true meaning, played *Fortunate Son* at his rallies. Aren't you inspired to write anything about this administration?

The answer is yes. I did write a song. It was actually released on January 6th 2021, called *Weeping In The Promised Land*. Years and years ago, I remember saying something about, 'Richard Nixon, man, he is a source of endless inspiration.' I could probably say the same about Mr. Trump. I wonder where are all the other creative writers? I mean, come on, you guys and gals, get out there! There's a whole lot to write about here. Yes, I am certainly inspired.

> **"I never got the chance to reconcile or even figure out what Tom was thinking. If indeed his thoughts were cohesive at that time."**

You've said that *Have You Ever Seen The Rain*, from 1970's *Pendulum*, was really about CCR's internal problems at the height of your success. Was it emotionally difficult revisiting that song for *Legacy*?

It's a wonderful sort of mysterious song. I'm delighted that it has become quite a popular song around the world over time, and it's in the modern era - it's passed two billion streams! That means young people are doing it. I'm very, very flattered about that. Originally the song was about the breaking-up of Creedence, but these days, before I perform the song, I tell the audience that nowadays it reminds me of them, of the audience, of the people who have been singing my songs all these years and keeping them in their heart, and so I'll say, 'You've been a rainbow in my heart, and this song has a rainbow in it,' and then I do this song.

Creedence really began to splinter when your brother left in 1971. Did it hurt that the person who should have supported you most walked away first?

Oh, yeah. I never got the chance to reconcile or even figure out what Tom was thinking – if indeed his thoughts were cohesive or understandable at that time. I'm pretty sure he was upset and confused – and I don't mean that in any demeaning way; I was upset and confused during those times, too – certainly not like an adult would process all that stuff. But at the same time, when Tom left, he also said, 'Saul Zaentz is my best friend'. That's such a goofy statement considering what Saul Zaentz was doing to me at the time. I would have loved to try to figure out what the heck Tom was thinking. I didn't get to speak to him directly – I was speaking through one of our road people – and so I remember telling this guy, Bruce: 'Go tell Tom, look, let's all just take a vacation. Let's just knock off for a year or two. Don't make any grand declarations about it, let's just stop doing this until we can make some sense'. But Tom didn't wanna do that. He was adamant about having some definitive action, a decisive event, and so he did that. At that point, then, I'm left with Doug and Stu, and that's kind of a three-legged stool. Doug and Stu were already each other's best friend, so I was gonna lose any argument in that crowd. And the only reason I stayed around, remarkably, is I kept walking around going, 'Well, I guess they deserve a shot,' meaning a chance to be whatever it is they say they need to do with Creedence, right? I didn't think there was a chance in hell that any of them would come up with a good song. That's just how I felt. I'd known these people for a long time, and I certainly thought that it was career suicide to make the move that they wanted to do, but to keep the band together I had agreed to acquiesce. But then Tom left, so that really threw it out of loop, and then I'm stuck with this thing I said I would agree to. And then, of course, they made their recording and it was pretty awful, and that was that.

The resulting album, 1972's *Mardi Gras*, was dominated by songs written by the others, after you agreed to relinquish your songwriting monopoly. As a result, it compromised the strength of the group's material. Jon Landau,

ED CARAEFF / ICONIC IMAGES

Fogerty – who turned 80 the month before his appearance at this year's Glastonbury – is still very much a live performer.

in his review for *Rolling Stone*, called *Mardi Gras* "the worst album I have ever heard from a major rock band". You've always distanced yourself from that album, but now *Someday Never Comes* is its only song to feature on *Legacy.* Do you have a different relationship with that song to the album it came from?
I think it's a really good song, and I dare say this is probably a better version than the version that was supposedly played by Creedence. Creedence was me and Doug and Stu, and that was disintegrating rather quickly. I suppose I'm not the first band or company or even administration that has found itself in this situation – 'Wow, we got here because we were trying to do the best quality, the highest level of things, but we don't seem to be doing that now. We seem to be okaying the very lowest standard of quality just to stick together, or just to hang on to power.' I guess that's a natural human emotion, but that last gasp of Creedence was not designed to be trying their best. It was the opposite. 'Okay, I'm gonna let this guy try to make a record because he demanded to have that right, and I think it's loony but we're gonna do it.' And so we did it, and it was loony, and there you go.

> **"Saul [Zaentz] was such a mean character in my psyche for years, and by the time he passed away, he wasn't important to me."**

You've previously called that situation a "time bomb", and you must have known that the end was coming, but when that inevitable break-up happened in October 1972, were you confident, because you wrote all the songs, that you would have a secure future, or were you scared because you didn't know where to go next?
A little of both, I'm gonna say. I knew that continuing Creedence was untenable, because I did not have collaborators. The collaboration ethic seemed to have disappeared, so it seemed like this has to end, even though it's painful, so that I can somehow get to the next thing. And I thought that my musicality would help me and see me through – what I didn't know at the time, of course, was that then Saul Zaentz was going to let everybody else in the band free of their contract, except me, and then hang on to me with a death grip that was overwhelming. It sounds pretty naïve, but I didn't know the world could be so unfair.

Any hopes Fogerty may have had for a new beginning beyond the confines of CCR were quickly extinguished. Under the terms of his deal with Fantasy, Fogerty owed the label a preposterous 180 songs – a near-impossible quota that effectively locked him into a lifetime of creative servitude. The clause meant that if he didn't deliver the required songs, he couldn't record elsewhere. And if he did, the rights would still go to Fantasy. It was a devastating realisation: the very act of writing songs – the actual thing that had always defined him – had become a trap.

That contract put such a dead weight on you. Did you stop writing completely, or did you just not want to record?
I did end up doing the *Blue Ridge Rangers* record (1973), and it's notable that I didn't write any of those songs…

Yes, it's all covers of country songs.
For some reason, I really couldn't [write]. It seemed to be a block… I couldn't put a song together. But I could still make music and make choices about music, and that seemed to be a device that I could use to get the wheels turning again. And so, that's what I did. I made the choice to try and play all the instruments. And then I went to Saul and said, 'Look, I'm having trouble producing music. My soul, my brain is not working. I need to get some sort of relief'. Much to my surprise, what Saul said – instead of saying, 'Oh, well I understand. What can we do to help you make more records so that I make more money?' Which I would have understood. Instead, what he said after I had explained that I was in an artistic crush and I couldn't make any music, he looked at me and said, 'That's not true. The whole history of art shows that the greatest art comes under conditions of oppression and depression'. I was so thrown by his lack of understanding. I just couldn't even believe he said that. He had all the people from his level of the record company there at that meeting, and I was there alone. The phrase blew my mind. I didn't get over that for years. I didn't know anyone could be that detached and just not understanding of how things worked. Or maybe he just didn't care.

The following album, 1975's self-titled *John Fogerty* was a hopeful effort, yielding the now-perennial *Rockin' All Over The World*, but after shelving its follow-up, a disillusioned and beleaguered Fogerty withdrew from the spotlight entirely for almost a decade.

He'd eventually return to writing and recording, but the shadow of Fantasy Records and Saul Zaentz loomed large. The painful cost of buying his freedom to sign with Warner in the early eighties was giving up the publishing rights to his entire Creedence catalogue.

The 1985 album *Centerfield* marked a triumphant comeback, and included the defiant *Zanz Can't Danz*, a thinly veiled jab at Zaentz that led to a lawsuit and a forced title change. Even more bizarrely, Fogerty was later sued for allegedly plagiarising himself, with Zaentz claiming that his new song *The Old Man Down The Road* was too similar to the CCR hit *Run Through The Jungle*, a song Fogerty had written.

He ultimately prevailed, but the emotional toll of these conflicts and his predicament would take a deep psychological toll on Fogerty, fuelling a period of alcoholism that began to lift in 1991 after marrying Julie, who became a crucial part of his personal and professional recovery.

He began to carve out a new chapter with solo albums like *Blue Moon Swamp* (which won him a Grammy), *Deja Vu All Over Again*, and 2007's *Revival*, widely seen as a bold return to form.

Saul Zaentz died in 2014 but you've previously said that his death wasn't the closure you were looking for – instead, it was your creative comeback, spearheaded by Concord taking over Fantasy and trying to make amends, the release of *Revival*, and the great albums you'd released in the meantime. Was it a realisation that actually it was always your songs that were most important and not revenge?
Yeah. The funny thing is, Saul was such a mean character in my psyche for years, and by the time he passed away, he wasn't important to me. Julie

BRENT PERNIAC/ADMEDIA/SIPA USA / ALAMY

was important to me, and I had rediscovered my gift of songwriting. Things were going along fairly well, therefore it just was not some big relief that he'd passed. I still think what a waste of time all of that was – Saul, and getting my brother involved in his orbit. It's just such an entanglement.

Sadly, Tom contracted AIDS from a blood transfusion in the 80s, and died of tuberculosis in 1990. You said earlier that you hadn't resolved certain issues. Do you regret that you never made it up with Tom?
I don't leave it as a regret. At some point, I had to forgive Tom. The main issue probably being that Tom considered Saul Zaentz his best friend and said it very publicly – well, that's a pretty wacky stance for me to have to absorb, considering what Saul did to me. And so, in my heart of hearts, the way for me to deal with it was I forgave Tom. So that's not an issue, and some day, somewhere in space when we meet, he knows that now, that I have forgiven that and I don't worry about it. I choose to think of us the way we were when we were kids and we loved music and dreamed about someday being able to make a record, and those sort of things.

Your relationships with Doug and Stu, which were always fraught since the break-up, ended irrevocably on the eve of the group's induction into the Rock And Roll Hall of Fame in 1993, after you didn't let them perform with you that night due to them selling their voting rights in CCR to Saul. Is there no chance of reconciliation with them, despite you now being in a good place personally, financially and artistically?
Ha! For one thing, they're suing me right now! I just won the lawsuit – just a few months ago, I finally got a decision from the judge – and so then the judge instructed them to pay the attorneys' fees, which they're supposed to do, but they haven't even done that yet. It just seems to be a reccurring theme – whenever I put out a record or have something going on, then they sue me. It's been a cycle for many years. Yeah, that to me would preclude any kind of reconciliation.

So, with no chance of a reunion, *Legacy* is perhaps our only opportunity to hear 'new' CCR music. With that in mind, what do you hope people feel when they hear it, especially the younger listeners discovering you for the first time?
It's funny, I'm not sure that I understood this while I was making the record, but I've been told this now back to me. I've heard the word 'fresh' a bunch of times. 'Wow, it sounds fresh!' I didn't try to make it fresh, whatever that is. I was just trying to make it good. I was trying to do a good job, make a good record. But I think the thing you can really feel is there's joy in the music, because I feel unrestrained. In many ways, during the last times of Creedence, that was a band disintegrating, and things were not feeling all that wonderful every day. Whereas making this record with my family, with my kids, was a beautiful experience. I think there's a great sense of joy about the whole thing, and other people have told me that they hear that and feel that. ●

John Fogerty's Legacy: The Creedence Clearwater Revival years is out August 22 via Concord Music.

John Fogerty in 2025: peace at last.

DAVID McLISTER/PRESS

FIGHTING TALK

Whipping boys of the UK music press in the 90s, **Bush** know what an uphill battle feels like. Today they're still fighting, but instead of battling the detractors, they're prioritising improvement.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Gavin Rossdale has never been able to tune out the critics. For someone whose holy texts as a youth were the weekly UK music papers of the 70s and 80s, with all their gloriously vicious, vituperative opinions, it stung when his own band, Bush, fell prey to those same barbed pens during the band's dizzying mid-90s rise. Thirty-odd years on, he's still acutely aware that his music will still be scrutinised. Except these days the judgment comes from closer to home.

"My kids play guitar," he says. "So I've got to deliver records that fucking smack people in the face, cos I don't want them and their friends to go: 'Remember when they made those strong early records?'"

Rossdale is talking to *Classic Rock* via Zoom from Halifax, Nova Scotia on Canada's Eastern seaboard, where Bush are playing later tonight. It took them a 16-hour bus drive to get here, and Rossdale – as unfailingly polite and impressively handsome as he is - has the air of a man who has spent the best part of a day stuck in a tin can on wheels.

> **"I've never been able to get too full of myself and just float away. I've been forced to fight all the way."**

But even the Canadian highway system can't dent his enthusiasm for music generally and Bush specifically. The band – Rossdale plus guitarist Chris Traynor, bassist Corey Britz and drummer Nik Hughes – have just released *I Beat Loneliness*, their tenth album. It continues their great six-album run that stretches back to their reunion in 2010, and before that the four they made during their original incarnation between 1992 and 2003.

I Beat Loneliness is sometimes knotty and obtuse, sometimes stark and emotional. It's undeniably a rock record, but there are electronic touches and stark ballads, with Rossdale's rich, anguished vocal perpetually at the heart of it. It sounds like the work of a band still in forward motion, even after all this time.

"I should be making mid-tempo, acoustic, dirgy records, with everyone going: 'Well he did make a couple of decent ones back in the day', right?" he says. "But these are really intense, vital, ferocious records. I've never been able to get too full of myself and just float away, because I've never been allowed to. I've been forced to fight all the way. Which is no bad thing, by the way."

It's odd hearing Rossdale talk about having to "fight all the way", given his band's past successes. But the road to this point has been a long one, with slow, grinding struggles uphill and dizzying slides down the other side.

"I chose a life of pressure," he says. "I put myself in a position where I was living on a highwire, with nothing to fall back on. I think the only way to make something really valuable is to have nothing - no back up, no safety net."

The first time I met Rossdale was in July 1995. I'd been sent to cover Bush for an on-the-road piece as they toured the UK. Their debut album, *Sixteen Stone*, had been released the previous December in the US and lit up almost instantly. Indeed, it had been certified platinum there – one million sales, thank you very much – just a couple of weeks before we met.

It was a different matter in Britain. *Sixteen Stone* was only now being released in the UK, and the shows they were playing here reflected it: The Garage in London, the Wheatsheaf in Stoke-on-Trent, The Roadhouse in Manchester, the latter a 200-capacity basement bar full of cigarette smoke and beer fumes.

"I remember those gigs," Rossdale says of the latter. "We'd spent six months in America, playing these big venues where there were stage barriers. Then we get to the Roadhouse and it's like: 'Oh shit, what are we going to do here?'"

The Gavin Rossdale of 1995 wasn't a world away from the Gavin Rossdale of 2025. He was friendly and charming back then, too, even if he was still trying to process his band's newfound US fame, and already butting up against the accusations of grunge bandwagon-hopping from certain sections of the media that would plague the first act of Bush's career. "People call us an overnight success," he'd said. "What these people don't realise is that I've been doing this for ten years already." ▷

DOVE SHORE/PRESS

Bush 2025: (l-r) Corey Britz, Gavin Rossdale, Nik Hughes, Chris Traynor.

DOVE SHORE/PRESS

By that point, Rossdale had been a face on the London music scene since the mid-80s. “I started in such an ignorant way,” he says. “I wasn’t the kid in the bedroom from eleven to sixteen doing the groundwork. As soon as I started to sing, I was trying to be in a band.”

His biggest shot at success came with the glossy pop rockers Midnight, who released a couple of singles towards the end of the decade. Photos of Rossdale from the time show him looking like a cross between INXS’s Michael Hutchence and a peripheral member of the court of Louis XIV, and the music matched the image.

“I’d grown up listening to the Sex Pistols,” he says. “The bands I loved were much more primitive. But I wasn’t musically articulate enough to really say what I wanted.”

Neither Midnight nor his next band, The Little Dukes, made more than a ripple. At an impasse, he decided to move to Los Angeles temporarily in an attempt to galvanise his career and his life.

“I felt like I’d got too safe in London” he remembers. “I wanted to experience something different. I put myself in this environment where I was a fish out of water, couch surfing or sleeping in my car on Zuma Beach in Malibu. After that I had a different kind of lust for life.”

When he returned to the UK, he formed Bush, originally named Future Primitive, with guitarist Nigel Pulsford, who he had met at a gig. By that point he’d pretty much let go of any notion of becoming successful, although that was less desperation and more liberation.

“There was complete freedom, and that was reflected more in the music I was making,” he says. “I felt like the bands I’d been in before, they’d made music to tailor it to what people might like. For the first time I was in a band – and this is a fun one for you – I felt like I’d avoided being commercial.”

Bush were unlike any of the bands he’d played with before. It allowed Rossdale and Pulsford to channel their love of the underground music they both loved: Fugazi, Pixies, PJ Harvey. “I thought: ‘Fuck it, at least you’ll be in a cool band that no one has heard of, rather than being in an uncool band that no one has heard of.”

> **“We got so successful so quickly that we pissed a lot of people off. The stench of success was horrible for them.”**

Still, a record deal seemed as far off as it ever was.

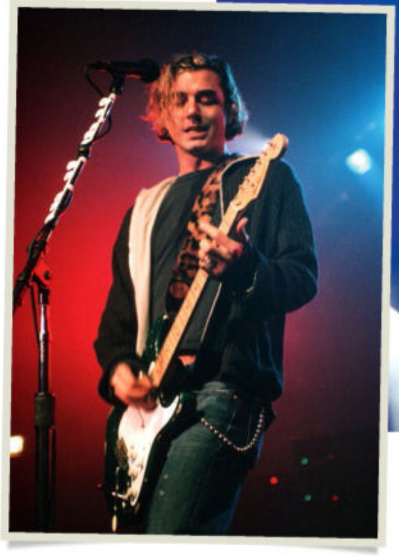
“There were two or three years of gigging, playing every club in London,” says Rossdale. “I could name you every A&R man – and it was always men. I could get demo time from every label going. But nobody wanted to sign us.”

Salvation came via Trauma Records, an untested start-up label located in LA’s sprawling suburban San Fernando Valley. It wasn’t a huge deal, but it was a deal. “It was my one shot,” he says. “People told me not to sign to them. But I just took that chance. Mostly because I didn’t have any other options.”

That one shot paid off. Released in November 1994, *Sixteen Stone* delivered big, grungy anthems that helped fill the hole left by Kurt Cobain’s death seven months earlier, as well as angular, awkward songs inspired by terrorism and toxic masculinity. But while the US embraced them, back home they were initially ignored, then treated with a mix of suspicion and derision by a music press hung up on Britpop.

“We got so successful so quickly that we pissed a lot of people off. I felt like we were shunned by a lot of people. The stench of success was horrible for a lot of people.”

Sixteen Stone is a far better album than its detractors would admit, and it holds up better than many other records from the same time. But the criticism stung Rossdale, and still does today. The decision to enlist uber-hip producer Steve Albini – whose previous clients included Nirvana, The Jesus Lizard and Rossdale’s beloved Pixies – to work on 1996 follow-up *Razorblade Suitcase* looks in hindsight like an attempt to claw back some credibility and/or head off the critics at the pass. *Razorblade Suitcase* was starker and thornier than its predecessor, and it ended up selling three million copies – half of what *Sixteen Stone* shifted. But for Rossdale, that wasn’t the point.



Rossdale with Bush in Manchester, November 2024, and (inset) at The Forum in London, February 1997.

MAIN: KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY; INSET: IAN DICKSON/REDFERNS

“To get someone of the stature of Steve Albini to come out and vouch for us and stick up for us and love us and defend us was incredible,” he says of the producer, who died in 2024. “Steve was an incredible person.”

Razorblade Suitcase was Bush’s last commercial big hitter. They released two more albums – 1999’s brilliant but underrated *The Science Of Things* and 2001’s *Golden State* – before splitting, tired of the grind and out of place amid nu metal’s frat-bro superstars and garage rock’s thrusting young bucks. In 2005, Rossdale released an album under the name Institute, although it was basically a solo record. An actual solo album, *Wanderlust*, followed in 2008.

“I did those records cos they [the other Bush guys] didn’t want to come back,” he says. “They’re kind of waste records – a waste of creative energy. I should have carried on doing Bush.”

Bush’s return in 2010 wasn’t hard to see coming. Contemporaries such as the Smashing Pumpkins and Alice In Chains had already reunited successfully, and Rossdale’s band looked ready to surf the growing wave of 90s nostalgia. Easy prey for the cynics and detractors who gave them such a rough ride first time around.

Except that’s not quite what happened. Rossdale and this new iteration of the band – original drummer Robin Goodridge (on board until 2018), guitarist Chris Traynor and bassist Corey Britz – refused to play to the I ❤ The 90s crowd. Instead they delivered a run of albums, starting with 2011’s *The Sea Of Memories*, that started strong and have grown in intent.

Tellingly, the shit they received 30-odd years ago from the critics is notable by its absence. Maybe it’s because they’re not operating at the same above-the-parapet levels they once were. Maybe it’s because the music press isn’t so pissed off about bands becoming successful without their permission. Or maybe – and this is most likely - people have realised what a great band Bush have always been.

Rossdale likes to joke that “the reviews got better as the sales went down”. It’s a funny line, and not an inaccurate one. But it overlooks how good their albums have been, up to and including the new *I Beat Loneliness*.

“Music is still really mysterious to me,” he says. “I kind of just put things together. And when I look back on them I couldn’t deconstruct them and do another song like that. I don’t connect to the idea of sitting around and waiting for the fairy dust to hit you at three in the morning. I mean, I don’t mind if the fairy does hit me at three o’clock in the morning and I write something down. But the goal is just to write and wait for the perfect line to drop out.”

One thing that is frustrating about Rossdale is his unwillingness to pull apart the meaning of his songs. “Words are like a suit of armour for people to feel solace in, or connect to,” he says vaguely at one point. “They’re going to wear them how they want.”

Whether this is a kind of emotional inarticulacy or a deliberate way of obfuscating his feelings isn’t clear, although it seems more like the latter than the former. Case in point: *I Beat Loneliness* itself, a title that seems pretty on the nose.

“Well, you know it’s one of my best paradoxes,” he begins. “It’s hard to take any paradox seriously. It’s just suggestive. It implies to me someone who’s trying, someone who lives in hope and is always looking on the brightest side of life.”

> **“I feel like we’re a really healthy, hard-working rock band.”**

Should we take *I Beat Loneliness* literally?

“Well, everyone is absolutely struggling with many things at once, while simultaneously having a really good time and trying to find their way through life,” he says. “I’ve been talking about all of these themes for ever.” He smiles. “But really, it was the first song that I wrote. I thought: ‘That’s a decent title. I’ll keep it until I come up with a better one’. And I never could.”

It’s evasive guff, of course, and he knows it. But Rossdale has an honesty that’s rare in musicians who have been doing it as long as he has. He’s under no illusions that his band are suddenly going to start selling *Sixteen Stone* numbers again.

“Back then it was a really exciting time, with no horizon,” he says of his band’s mid-90s boom years. “I felt like I was in the running. We were a band on a trajectory. Now, I feel like we’re a really healthy, hard-working rock band.”

But, bus-lag aside, Rossdale seems to have the same kind of drive he had 30-odd years ago. *I Beat Loneliness* is Bush’s sixth since reuniting, which works out at one every two and a half years. Bands who have been doing it this long aren’t supposed to put out records at that frequency. Then there are the tours (Bush hit the UK this year as support to Danish rockers Volbeat) and the 16-hour bus drives that come with them. Why is Rossdale still doing this? Perhaps he still has a point to prove. Or maybe he just loves what he’s doing.

“I’ve always sort of defied gravity with this band in the weirdest way,” he says. “I’ve managed to get everything the wrong way round. Some people have these crazy careers, where they don’t have to do too much and it just keeps going. Then you have the middle ground, which is what we’re in – bands who have to work and tour and release albums. But the main thing for me is to keep it vital. If it wasn’t vital it would be an awful, hollow existence. I keep doing this because it’s the most fun. I mean, all I’m doing is having a laugh.”

I Beat Loneliness is out now via EarMusic.

ED PERLSTEIN/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

THE REAL McCOY

Rick Derringer, famous for 60s classic *Hang On Sloopy* and *Rock And Roll Hoochie Koo,* died in May. Late last year he granted our sister title *Guitar Player* a rare and exclusive interview, in which he recalled inspiring Eddie Van Halen, being in a band with Johnny Winter, and much more.

Words: **Joe Bosso**

In 2024, *Guitar Player* contributing writer Joe Bosso tirelessly tracked down the elusive guitarist for a rare interview to discuss his wide-ranging career — from his time as a teen guitarist and singer with 60s group the McCoys to his 70s work with each of Johnny and Edgar Winter, his solo career, and his later work with 'Weird Al' Yankovic and former Beatle Ringo Starr's band.

Through great persistence, Bosso finally got his interview. Derringer proved to be a tough, though generous, subject, taking time to go through the disparate facets of his career and the various musicians he's known and befriended over the years.

Rick Derringer was a uniquely talented guitarist and songwriter, whose stylistic range covered everything from rock to fusion to pop. Amid all his work with and for other artists – including Todd Rundgren and Steely Dan's Donald Fagen – he recorded a solo album that remains essential in rock'n'roll: 1973's *All American Boy*.

> **"I was just blessed by the good Lord with the ability to play anything I heard."**

"I was a natural," Rick Derringer says, dispensing with any pretense of modesty. He's recalling the time when, at nine years old, in 1956 (the "Year of Elvis," he calls it), he got his first real guitar – a Harmony-type model with one pickup – and a copy of *Mickey Baker's Complete Course In Jazz Guitar*, and how, on his first night he was off and running. "Right away, I was playing chord sequences like a pro. I was totally hooked, and it all came very easily to me. I know some people hate to hear that, but I was just blessed by the good Lord with the ability to play anything I heard."

Within weeks, Derringer – or as he was known then, Rick Zehringer – was playing country and western tunes in bars in and around his hometown of Fort Recovery, Ohio, with his uncle Jim, a singer and guitar player. "It seemed like the most normal thing in the world," he says. "What wasn't normal, at least to me, was the money we made. The first time I played a gig, they passed a hat around and I made forty-three dollars. This was in the 1950s, so that was a lot of money at the time."

Country-western ditties were fine for a while, but rock'n'roll was exploding, and Derringer was enthralled by all the new sounds he heard.

"The first record I bought was by Buddy Holly, which of course had electric guitar on it," he says. "There was electric guitar on all the Elvis records. Suddenly the electric guitar came of age, and it was being used as a lead instrument. People became famous because they could play guitar. You could have a career as a guitar player. That's what I wanted."

He realised that he needed a band, and after the Zehringer family moved to Union City, Indiana, he formed his first band, with his brother Randy on drums and a neighbour, Richard Kelly, on bass. The group went through a succession of names. First there was The McCoys (inspired by a song titled *The McCoy*, the B-side of The Ventures hit *Walk, Don't Run*), then Rick And The Raiders. Briefly they were the Rick Z Combo, until they finally went back to The McCoys.

With Derringer fronting the band, The McCoys played around the Midwest and cut a single titled *You Know I Love You,* which received some regional airplay. By 1965 the group's line-up had changed – bassist Randy Jo Hobbs replaced Kelly, and organist Bobby Peterson signed on – and they scored a US No.1 single with their vibrant cover of *Hang On Sloopy*, which had been a hit the previous year by an R&B group called The Vibrations.

"People always ask me: 'Was it an exciting time?' And I say: "Yes, of course it was," Derringer says. "It's difficult for me to have an outside perspective on it, because I was on the inside and I was doing it. Here I was, seventeen years old, and I was in a successful band with a hit record, and we were playing all over the world. I was so happy." ▷

The Edgar Winter Group circa 1975: (l-r) Edgar Winter, Dan Hartman, Rick Derringer, Chuck Ruff. Below: The McCoys, with Derringer on the left.

> **"Did I know what it was like to be The Beatles? I *was* The Beatles in some form. I grew up like that."**

By the end of the 60s, The McCoys' career came to a close, and Rick Zehringer became Rick Derringer. But the guitarist's fortunes rebounded quickly – with The McCoys, he teamed with rising Texan blues star Johnny Winter. "That was the start of what really became my destiny," Derringer says. "I had no idea of what might lie ahead for me, but now that I look back on it all – the records I've made and the people I've played with – and it's pretty remarkable. And I was there for every second of it [laughs]."

According to Wikipedia, you recorded your lead vocal on *Hang On Sloopy* over backing tracks by a group called The Strangeloves, but it doesn't say you played guitar on it.
That's wrong information. I played all the guitar on *Hang On Sloopy*, including the solo. I sang lead and I also sang as part of the group. The Strangeloves were music producers – shysters, actually, from New York City – and they were in the business of cheating people.

Your solo is on it pretty spectacular, particularly for someone so young.
That was one take. I played it, and that was it. I just came up with it on the spot.

Had you heard the version titled *My Girl Sloopy* that The Yardbirds recorded with Jeff Beck?
That was way later. No, I never heard that. The first version I heard was by The Vibrations.

You said it was an exciting time for you. How much so? This was when The Beatles and the Rolling Stones were flocked by screaming girls everywhere they went. Did The McCoys experience the same thing?
Yeah, it was like that. I opened for the Rolling Stones on their very first American tour. And of course we received the same adulation that the Stones would get. People ask me: "Did you see what it was like to be a Beatle?" Well, I already knew what it was like to be a Beatle. I had the number-one record in the world while *Yesterday* by The Beatles was number two. Did I know what it was like to be The Beatles? I *was* The Beatles in some form. I grew up like that.

The McCoys were tagged as a 'bubblegum' group, but you started to venture into psychedelia. Did your label fight you at all?
The label didn't stop us, but we were known as a bubblegum group, which wasn't a good connotation. Before *Sloopy*, we played R&B, soul, jazz, lots of different kinds of music. We looked at ourselves as a quality musical group, and suddenly we were pigeonholed in a genre we didn't feel good about.

As soon as our contract with FGG Productions was up – it wasn't with Bang Records – we chose to get out. Now Bert Berns, the president of Bang Records, he was a pretty good guy. He came to me and said: "If you want to continue with Bang Records and not with those guys, I'll show you how much money they're cheating you out of and make sure that you get a fair shake". Well, we said: "No, we've got to get away from this whole thing". We got a contract with Mercury, and they allowed us to do anything we wanted. We were on Mercury when I met Johnny Winter. That was the opportunity to get out of that whole genre.

Hooking up with Johnny Winter must have seemed to your fans like a left turn.
It probably was. But it gained me so many other fans. Johnny Winter was signed to the biggest record contract in the history of the music business at that time. He was well-received, so suddenly I was playing with a legit guy. That opened the doors for me. He asked me to produce his records.

Now, the thing about his big contract – the label forgot that he was a blues guitar player. Blues didn't sell that many records to warrant so much money. In order to change that situation, they said he has to be more rock oriented. That's where I came in, to bring the rock'n'roll. The McCoys came with me to join Johnny, but we couldn't use that name because it had negative connotations, so the band became Johnny Winter And.

I was watching a clip of that band from 1970. Right from the opening song, *Guess I'll Go Away*, you and Johnny were dangerous on stage.
We had fun [laughs]. It was a contest every night to see who could play the best.

How much room did Johnny give you to solo?
If we're talking about albums, I would make the rules because I was the producer. If it was live, we didn't have any specific rules. Now I understand from other people that play with other artists that they're given rules about what and how much they're allowed to play. We didn't have anything like that.

Johnny was very generous about sharing his blues knowledge. He showed me specific things I didn't know – tunings and slide guitar. It wasn't because he wanted me to know these things, I asked him. I said: "Help me with these things".

Johnny recorded your song *Rock And Roll, Hoochie Koo*. Did you have reservations about him singing it at the time?
No. As a matter of fact, that's what I was getting at before. The first thing I did was make sure the music was more commercial, more rock oriented. I wrote *Rock And Roll, Hoochie Koo* – the rock was me and 'hoochie koo' was Johnny. He was the band leader, so we did it his way. The first opportunity I had to do it my way was on my first solo album, *All American Boy*.

We had a great time playing, Johnny and me. It was a kind of competition. Eventually he got tired of trying to compete, so he disbanded that group, and that's when I started playing with Edgar Winter's White Trash.

MAIN: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; INSET: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

Rick with his band Derringer at Day On The Green at Oakland Coliseum, California, July 23, 1977.

How did Johnny feel when you went off to play with his brother? Was there any weirdness about the situation?
By then Johnny had become engrossed in the drug world and checked himself into rehab. Suddenly there was no touring, and that ended that band. I joined his brother, and I produced Edgar Winter's White Trash. That's when I started playing with White Trash live.

You produced The Edgar Winter Group's album *They Only Come Out at Night*, which featured the big hits *Free Ride* and *Frankenstein*. What was it like working with Ronnie Montrose, who played the guitar solos on both of those tracks.
Ronnie played the solos on the album version of *Free Ride*, I played lead on the single version. I enjoyed working with him. He was a good guitar player. He was very inventive and had a good sense of humour. Ronnie was a brave guy, and Edgar was a very planned-out, nerdy kind of musician. He wanted things the same every time, and Ronnie was the total opposite.

As producer, did you direct Ronnie on what to play, or just let him go?
I never showed him anything specific. For instance, on *Frankenstein* it was like: "Here's the guitar solo section. Take off!" He'd do his thing, and I was fine with everything he played. Same thing on *Free Ride*. It was: "Here's your part. Just play lead guitar".

Soon after that album, in 1973, you had a hit with your solo album *All American Boy*, which included your own version of *Rock And Roll, Hoochie Koo*. The guitar solo on it is strikingly different from the one you did on the *Johnny Winter And* album.
Oh, yeah. Those are two totally different records. The one I did with Johnny was more in keeping with his style. When I did my version, it was my opportunity to play and create what I thought it could be. I went for it.

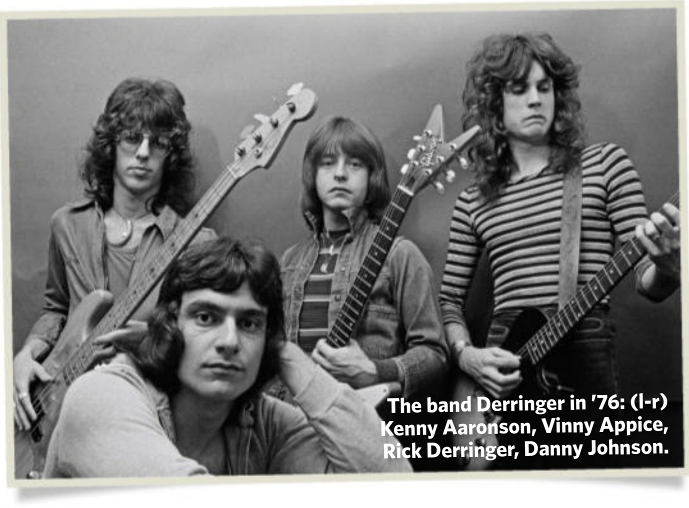
On the cover photo of *All American Boy* you're posing with a red Stratocaster.
That was a photo by the Japanese photographer Hiro. It wasn't even my guitar, it was Johnny Winter's. He gave it to me because he didn't like it. We used it for the cover because it matched the clothing and everything, the silver and red. We thought the guitar looked cool.

Around this time, you began appearing on a lot of other artists' records. Were they looking for you to do anything in particular, or did they call you based solely on your reputation?
It was pretty simple, really. They'd be like: "Can you come into the studio today and record something for me?" I lived in Manhattan, so I would say: "Yeah, sure". That's all there was to it. There were a lot of great guitar players all over the world, but they didn't live right down the street from the studio.

Todd Rundgren featured you on a few albums. Did he have any specifics for what he wanted you to play?
It would depend on the song, I guess. We were friends, and I think he just wanted another name on the record. You know, "I got Rick Derringer on here!" [laughs]. I always enjoyed playing with him. On some songs I would just play a harmony with a melody that he had already recorded, or in some cases he would just allow me to go for it.

What was your relationship like with the Steely Dan guys?
In the case of Steely Dan, I played on Donald Fagen's demo that was eventually used to create Steely Dan. They kind of knew of me initially, and then I was on the road during the making of their first album. I didn't do that record, but I played a little something on most every album after that, including Donald Fagen's solo record. I was just accessible. They knew I could come in there and play whatever they wanted.

Steely Dan's core members Fagen and Walter Becker had a reputation for being kind of taskmasters, doing endless takes. Did you find that when you played for them?
I didn't have that kind of experience with them. They pretty much just ▷



The band Derringer in '76: (l-r) Kenny Aaronson, Vinny Appice, Rick Derringer, Danny Johnson.

BOTTOM: FIN COSTELLO/REDFERNS; TOP: GREGG COBARR/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES

played me the song. “Here you go, Rick. We want it to be a blues kind of thing”. So that’s what I did.

In 1978 you gave a young hotshot named Neil Giraldo his start when you hired him for your band. What is it like mentoring him?
I found Neil to be very useful on a couple of levels. He played really good guitar – *really* good. He didn’t always have to play lead, cos I was in the band [laughs]. He’d usually play rhythm, but he played really good rhythm. When we went into the studio to record *Guitars And Women*, I found out that he also was a pretty good piano player, so he played some piano on that album.

Mike Chapman was working on a record in the same studio. He called me and said: “Rick, would you mind if I used your guitar player on this record?” Not thinking logically, I said: “Sure, why not?” It turned out that record was by Pat Benatar. Neil and Pat met, and that was that. They became husband and wife, and they’re still together today.

A lot of people might not know it’s you playing the guitar solo on some big power ballads.
Yeah, I played on Bonnie Tyler’s *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* and for Air Supply I played on *Making Love Out Of Nothing At All* – that’s one of my favourite guitar solos.

That’s so surprising.
Well I really enjoyed playing that solo. It has kind of a classical music beginning, but it’s not me showing off. I’m just playing music. It’s very heartfelt. I like it.

Can you tell us a bit a bit about working with “Weird Al” Yankovic?
A lot of people were like: “What’s Rick doing?” You know, I had a pretty good production career going for myself, so it didn’t strike me as unusual to work with Weird Al. I grew up in a family that liked novelty music. They had 78s of Spike Jones and stuff like that. When I was approached to a single with Al, I said:“Do you have more songs like this?” He said yeah, so I said we should do a whole album. I thought if we can make a success of his songs, it would have no competition. Because there wasn’t anything like his stuff out at the time.

I produced his first album [*“Weird Al” Yankovic*, 1983] out of my pocket. There was no record company support at all. We made a great record and sold it to this label, Scotti Brothers. The Scotti brothers were in record promotion, and they had just started a record company. There were other record companies that wanted the album, but I told Al: “If the Scotti brothers take it, you’ll probably be cheated, but you’ll probably be guaranteed of having a hit because these guys are good at what they do”. We released it on the Scotti Brothers, and it was an instant hit.

Al was at the advent of MTV. He knew what he was doing. I left him after six albums, two Grammys and two stars on a Hollywood Walk Of Fame. He’s done very well. But here’s the bottom line: I thought that it would help my production career, but suddenly I became known as a novelty producer. As much as I love Weird Al – he’s a good guy, very talented and a hard worker – he single-handedly ruined my production career.

Derringer and Johnny Winter at the 2012 Rock’n’Blues Fest in New York City.

You played some cool guitar on his records, particularly on *Eat It*. Obviously you were emulating Eddie Van Halen’s solo on *Beat It*.
I was. What’s interesting is Eddie told us that he copied that style from listening to us. The guitar player in the Rick Derringer band was Danny Johnson, and I asked him to play with us because he was one of the first people I ever saw who did that style. That was one of the reasons he got the gig. Eddie Van Halen said he was a big fan of that band, and he came to see us play regularly.

> “As much as I love Weird Al [Yankovic], he single-handedly ruined my production career.”

Did Eddie ever tell you what he thought of your solo on *Eat It*?
He didn’t. He never talked about it specifically.

You’ve also played with Ringo Starr And His All-Starr Band, and did a few tours with him. What was that like?
It was fun. The whole band was fun. Gary Wright, who died just recently, was a keyboard player. Edgar Winter was in the band. He played keyboards and sax. Wally Palmer from The Romantics was the other guitar player. It was a little funny, though. You know how I said that *Hang On Sloopy* was number one and *Yesterday* by The Beatles was number two? Well, on the tour, I told that story for the first few shows and then I’d play *Hang On Sloopy*. After the third show, a roadie came up to me and said: “Did you get permission from Ringo to tell that story?” I said: “No, should I?” And he said: “You probably should”.

What happened?
I went to Ringo’s dressing room, and he graciously admitted me. I told him: “You’ve been sitting right there behind me every night, and you’ve heard me tell that story. Is it okay with you?” And he said: “I didn’t play on either one of them” [laughs]. That was his answer, so I guess it was okay. But then I limited my telling of that story, because I rethought it: “I’m playing with Ringo. I don’t really need to tell that any more”.

Rick Derringer with Ringo Starr And His All-Starr Band, June 2011.

In 2023 you released the album *Rock The Yacht,* on which you and your wife, Jenda, share vocals. Despite its title, it’s more of a pop album with big ballads.
It’s a progression of everything that I did in the past to now. People would like me to continue playing the music that I played when I was a teenager or when I was in my twenties. They want me to rock’n’roll over and over like a young guy. But I’m not a young guy, I’m seventy-six. We grow older and our musical tastes change a little bit. *Rock The Yacht* reflects a new version of who Rick Derringer is, who he’s become, and what the music is. I really enjoy it. You can get it anywhere that sells music.

JOHNNY WINTER: BOBBY BANK/WIREIMAGE; RINGO: SAMIR HUSSEIN/GETTY

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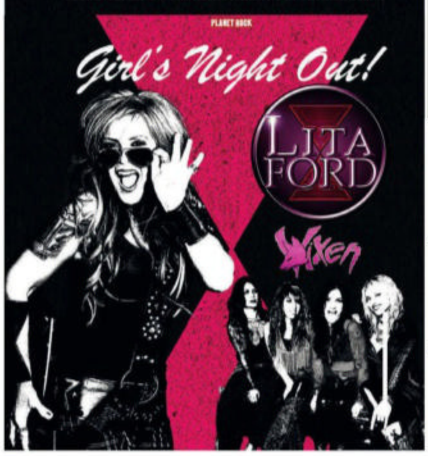

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STRANGE MAGIC

John Lennon called them "sons of The Beatles". Axl Rose said there was nothing like them. But how did a trio of Brummies create the progressive orchestral pop rock band who eventually became a global phenomenon following 1975's breakthrough album *Face The Music*?

Words: **Mick Wall**

Thursday 5 June, 1975. Following an overwhelming vote in favour at the referendum, prime minister Harold Wilson takes Britain into the European Economic Community, aka the Common Market. Goodbye fish and chips, hello frogs' legs, warns one especially 'patriotic' tabloid. But by the end of the month there is an undeniable feeling of *joie de vivre* in the air as the country plunges into one of those "Do you remember…" heatwaves that inspires TV newsreels of heat-stroked housewives frying eggs on pavements. Bottled water hasn't been invented yet, so everyone chain-sucks ice lollies.

> **"I made up *Evil Woman* on the spot. It was the quickest thing I'd ever done."**
>
> **Jeff Lynne**

The UK singles chart is not so sun-dappled: Tammy Wynette's *Stand By Your Man* spends four weeks at No.1, and is followed into the top spot by *Whispering Grass* by two of the stars of BBC TV comedy *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* (delightful then, 'cancelled' now). Rod Stewart's *Sailing* will stink out the rest of the summer hols. Albums wise, it's equally dispiriting. Among the year's biggest sellers are Perry Como's *40 Greatest Hits*, T*he Best Of The Stylistics*, and *40 Golden Greats* by Jim Reeves. Although Floyd, Zep and Queen release landmark albums in '75 they can only muster one greatest hit between them: the six-minute mock opera *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

Kids – you wanna know how punk rock started, back in '76? Pass the amphetamine sulphate. Or, alternatively, grab some busty cellos and livewire violins and uncork a decent red. Add some big booming drums, some loud electric guitars – and kaboom!

Beethoven-meets-Chuck Berry! Mozart on the Moog! Forget parochial UK punk for bored teenagers, this was pan-European sophisti-pop for all the family.

Wait… why are you looking at me funny?

It was the fourth ELO album *Eldorado* that singer, songwriter, guitarist and producer Jeff Lynne, considered the turning point. "That was the first time I'd used the [full] orchestra and choir," he told the LA Times in 1977. "It was

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY IMAGES

ELO in 1975: (l-r) Melvyn Gale, Hugh McDowell, Bev Bevan, Jeff Lynne, Richard Tandy, Kelly Groucutt, Mik Kaminski.

a giant step, really, and from then on I've seen what direction to go in."

That *Eldorado* is now regarded in both *Classic Rock* and *Rolling Stone* as one of the Top 50 Greatest prog albums of all time bestows a retrospective critical glow ELO never achieved in their heyday. That *Eldorado* became their big commercial breakthrough in the US, a Top 20 record complete with Top 10 single, *Can't Get It Out Of My Head*, was proof enough for Lynne that ELO were both the real deal and that they now truly belonged to him.

Recording the next all-important ELO album, at Musicland, a studio in the basement of a hotel on the outskirts of Munich, in June 1975, Lynne was now determined to shed the overt prog associations in favour of more melodically memorable songs, compact verses blossoming into full-spectrum choruses. In short, catchy chart hits. Or, as ELO's fearsome mafia-connected manager Don Arden used to counsel: "Art for art's sake, boys. Hit singles for fuck's sake".

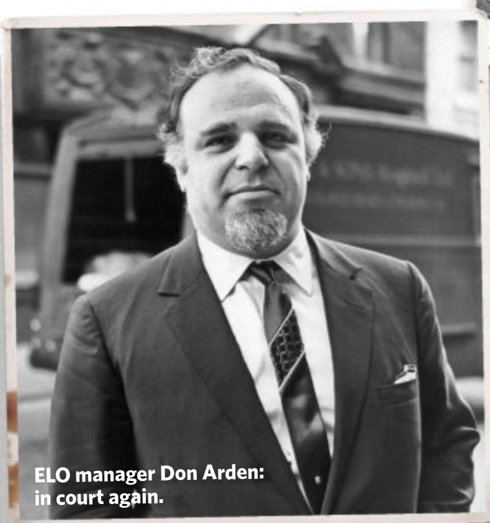
The fifth ELO album, to be titled *Face The Music*, would initially be presented as another conceptual masterwork, as had all their albums up until now. But, just as Arden predicted, it would be the first really big ELO single, *Evil Woman*, that would be the real difference maker, becoming their first single to go Top 10 in both the US and UK.

The last track recorded for *Face The Music, Evil Woman* was an afterthought dashed off in minutes by a panicked Lynne after realising "there was not a good single" on it. "So I sent the band out to a game of football and made up *Evil Woman* on the spot. It was the quickest thing I'd ever done."

It was also one of the finest. This was no longer about gimmicky classical rock. "I don't think that's us any more," Lynne insisted. In fact, *Evil Woman* was the permissive sound of 1975 finessed Phil Spector-style into one glorious crescendo of gospel blues piano, funky jingle-jangle guitar, disco-cooking clavinet, Queen-lush harmonies, heavenly strings, even a subtle Beatles hat-tip in the lyric '*There's a hole in my head where the rain comes in*', in reference to *Fixing A Hole* from *Sgt. Pepper's*. "It was kind of a posh one for me," said Lynne, "with all the big piano solos and the string arrangement. It was inspired by a certain woman, but I can't say who. She's appeared a few times in my songs."

Even without *Evil Woman*, the rest of *Face The Music* would probably have been judged a more-than-worthy successor to *Eldorado*, from its stormy instrumental opener *Fire In The Sky* – big-valley production, noises-off knocking, back-masked spoken words, an angelic choir summoning the spirit of Handel's *Messiah*, joined by melodramatic drums, kick-ass guitars and

MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY



ELO manager Don Arden: in court again.

The Move in 1970: (l-r) Bev Bevan, Roy Wood, Jeff Lynne.

swirling synthesisers – to its mellifluous grand finale *One Summer Dream*. It also contained another hit single – at least in the US – in *Strange Magic*, a wistful swirl of honeyed guitars and synth-silk vocals Lynne would eventually re-record several times over the years. There was also an all-out rocker in *Poker*.

Lynne had largely abandoned the sound-of-thunder guitars he'd showcased on earlier ELO recordings, even leaving the vocals on *Poker* to bassist Kelly Groucutt, propelled by the galloping synths of Richard Tandy.

Tandy was now Lynne's right-hand man in the studio. "He'd argue with me, hang out till six in the morning, he'd do whatever was needed," said a grateful Lynne. Tandy, a multi-instrumentalist from the same hardscrabble Birmingham scene as Lynne, now oversaw a dazzling array of pianos, Moog, clavinet, Oberheim synth, Wurlitzer electric piano, Mellotron, Yamaha analogue synth, Arp 2600 synth, and harmonium.

As importantly, Tandy also served as Lynne's musical envoy to Louis Clark, who'd conducted the 40-piece orchestra and choir on *Eldorado* and now returned to do the same on *Face The Music*. (Clark later became the evil genius behind *Hooked On Classics*.)

Bev Bevan would slap down the drums in Musicland's echoey service corridors then double-track the snare and tom toms. The band – completed by Mik Kaminski on violin and Hugh McDowell and Melvyn Gale on cellos – would record their parts, then orchestra and choir were added later in London. Lynne would wait until the very last minute to record his vocals. "This is what I've always worked for," he said. "It's my group, really, mine and Bev's." There was never any doubt about who was in control, though.

Early on, Lynne argued that the entire musical character of ELO could be traced directly back to *I Am the Walrus*, throwaway B-side to The Beatles in 1967 No.1 *Hello, Goodbye*.

> **"I was trying to write stuff that wasn't me... It was a lot of waffle, based on instrumental, avant-garde stuff."**
>
> **Lynne on earlier ELO albums**

He was ridiculed, of course. Comparing any group to The Beatles was simply unthinkable, let alone to do it with a group as patently uncool as ELO. Then at the end of 1975 as *Evil Woman* took over every radio station in New York, John Lennon, who now lived there, spoke publicly of his admiration for ELO, describing them as the "sons of The Beatles".

After years of struggle – from schizophrenic origins to playing musical chairs with record labels, band members, management, popularity itself – ELO had finally found a winning formula. As a result, *Face The Music* became the template for the trio of globe-straddling ELO albums that followed: *A New World Record* (1976), *Out Of The Blue* (1977) and *Discovery* (1979).

ELECTRIC LIGHT ORCHESTRA
FACE THE MUSIC

Just as Don Arden predicted, however, it was a giant hit single that really made Lynne's dreams come true. From *Evil Woman* would later come *Livin' Thing, Telephone Line, Don't Bring Me Down, Mr. Blue Sky* and others, all era-defining hits that by the end of the seventies had sold more than 50 million copies – allowing Arden to buy American multimillionaire Howard Hughes's Bel Air mansion. "For cash!" as he was quick to remind you.

Born in a rundown suburb of Birmingham, this was 27-year-old Jeff Lynne in a place – musically, at least – that felt like home. Far from being a classical music revivalist, or rock avant-gardist, Lynne had been brought up on Elvis, schooled by the Everly Brothers, and further educated by The Beatles. He'd strummed the Brum scene, graduating at 18 when he joined local bigshots The Nightriders, taking the spot earlier occupied by another talented local teen, Roy Wood. Wood was off to The Move, where he would write and sing all 10 of the monster hits they set fire to the UK charts with between 1967 and 1972: *Flowers In The Rain, Fire Brigade, Blackberry Way*... The Move were the Brummie Beatles.

When The Nightriders petered out, Wood helped Lynne put together The Idle Race, a typical-for-the-times outfit that had also inhaled The Beatles and today sound like a very early ELO. Two albums, various singles – all written, sung and produced by Lynne – but no hits.

Lynne and Wood, the latter older by a year, regularly met for a pint where the notion of "a group with strings" ▷

THE MOVE: CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE; DON ARDEN: FREDERICK R. BUNT/GETTY

Electric Light Orchestra in full 'pomp' on TV music show *Supersonic* in 1975.

The air cello competition never really took off.

became a recurring conversation piece. Rock repurposing classical motifs had been on the rise since The Beatles first showed how it could be done with *Eleanor Rigby* and its double string quartet arrangement.

Procol Harem's *A Whiter Shade Of Pale*, the biggest-selling single of 1967, was based on its incense-and-hash Hammond Organ reimagining of JS Bach's 18th-century opus *Air On The G String*. Another Birmingham group shedding sixties pop in favour of seventies rock were The Moody Blues, who utilised the London Festival Orchestra for their foundational prog album from the same year, *Days Of Future Past*.

Wood and Lynne had an idea, along similar lines. What they both desired most, however, was to be regarded with all the gravitas that The Move had been denied. The year before, *Rolling Stone* had declared: "The Move deserve to be put in the same category as Led Zeppelin and the Faces." But The Move never had a chart album, and by 1970 were viewed in the same cheerful aspect as Mungo Jerry or Slade – good for a laugh on *Top Of The Pops*.

They needed to alter the public mindset, beginning with their new *Monty Python*-esq, eight-syllable name: The Electric Light Orchestra – Wood's idea after buying a cheap Chinese cello. Lynne rolled with it.

For the next year Wood, Lynne and Move drummer Bev Bevan would record both as The Move and the Electric Light Orchestra, the former to help fund the launch of the latter.

The last Move album was recorded quickly, but the first ELO album, recorded at the same time, took forever as Lynne and Wood battled each other for creative supremacy. "I wanted to be boss and he wanted to be boss," Lynne told *Melody Maker*.

Their debut album, *No Answer*, was released to little fanfare in December 1971. Four months later came The Move's final Top 10 single, *California Man* – greasy 1950s-rock'n'roll-meets-pastiche

MAIN: CHRIS WALTER/WIREIMAGE; INSET: ANTONY MATHEUS/GETTY

ELO, London 1976.

1970s-glam. Then in June came the first ELO single: *10538 Overture*, a Lynne song, which he co-produced and shared lead vocals on with Wood. Bruising *Strawberry Fields Forever* cellos, French horns and Hendrix. It went Top 10 and *No Answer* finally sniffed the Top 30. The next time would be even better.

But *ELO 2*, in 1973, was worse. With Wood gone, Lynne overcompensated for the loss with five longer and longer tracks. The only respite was a cover of *Roll Over Beethoven*, with its never-gets-old novelty intro. It rewarded the band with another Top 10 single, but again the album only brushed the Top 30.

The third ELO album, *On The Third Day* (geddit?), was closer to the orchestral pop of ELO to come, but musically unfocused; Stones rock on the minor UK chart single *Ma-Ma-Ma Belle*, sleek Marvin Gaye funk on *Showdown. OTTD* was the first of three consecutive ELO albums to not even register on the UK chart.

ANDRE CSILLAG/SHUTTERSTOCK

It was different in America, though, as each new ELO album sold a little more than the last one. With America still in mourning for The Beatles, ‘serious’ fans now turned to the new ‘progressive rock’ of Yes and Jethro Tull, Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin. It was to this American audience that ELO was first pitched. ELO mixed classical with rock and produced extra-long album tracks that were perfect num-num for stoned FM radio listeners nursing their bongs. Hence the beating heart of the success of *Eldorado*.

Face The Music, released in the US in September 1975 – but delayed for another two months in Britain before it made an appearance – would further that proudly pretentious lineage. But as Jeff Lynne later confessed, on those earlier ELO albums “I was trying to write stuff that wasn’t me. It was a lot of waffle, based on instrumental, avant-garde stuff that I didn’t particularly like, but thought I should like.”

In America, where critics still judged ELO on their concepts more than their choruses, *Circus* described Side Two of *FTM* as “Lynne’s masterpiece”, and noted “influences as divergent as George and Ira Gershwin and country music…”

> **“Jeff Lynne was badass. There was nothing like ELO in America in the seventies. There still isn’t.”**
>
> **Axl Rose in 1990**

But side-long masterpieces were no longer Lynne’s chief turn-on. There were moments, he said, singing something for the first time, “where I’ve thought: ‘Phew, that feels like a big hit.’ It doesn’t happen often, but it’s great when it does”.

Yet despite their ever-mounting success, ELO remained faceless. Lynne riding into the British press launch of *Face The Music* on an elephant was cringe-inducing attempt to rectify this. As was the jarring image of an electric chair on the album sleeve.

As Bev Bevan told one reporter: “I get a lot of drugs handed to me from fans, although I never take them. I pass them onto the road crew who will scramble to get their hands on the pills and smokes. And it’s the same with girls. Each member of the band does the same with their own roadies. Few of the road crew are too fussy, especially as the night wears on and the drink takes effect.”

Lynne always claimed Newcastle Brown Ale as his narcotic of choice. “I had tried pot but it never did anything for me. I was always just a beer drinker at that time. Loads of it, mind you. I got to be enormous at one point.”

“They were like old men,” Sharon Osbourne, née Arden, told me. Tour managing the band for her father, in the late seventies, she said, “was so boring it nearly drove me mad”.

However, the demands of US tours that saw them perform 68 shows in 75 days at one point did take their toll, eventually leading to the end of Lynne’s marriage to Rosemary Adams. Two more marriages and half a century later, still no one knows what Jeff Lynne actually looks like, just the meme-like image of unruly head-and-chin hair, tinted grandad glasses submerged somewhere within.

The music really was the thing. As Axl Rose, who tried and failed to get him to produce *November Rain* for Guns N’ Roses in 1990, told me. “Jeff Lynne was badass. There was nothing like ELO in America in the seventies. There still isn’t.”

By 1978, ELO’s US success had been duplicated the world over, and the band that could barely fill Birmingham Town Hall when *Face The Music* was released now headlined eight nights at Wembley’s Empire Pool (now Wembley Arena), filling it with spaceships, robots, lasers and thousands of lit faces.

“Probably the happiest I could ever be was having the headphones on doing the lead vocal,” Lynne once said. “I loved recording all the harmonies and then hearing them come in just right when I’m doing the choruses and thinking: ‘Yes! It fits!’”

CUTTING HEADS

Friends for two decades, blues giants **Joe Bonamassa** and **Joanne Shaw Taylor** invited *Classic Rock* to join them and press 'Record' as they put the world to rights – from AI and internet trolls to crap journalists, and the music execs who need a punch in the face.

Words: **Henry Yates**

Forget the rocketing sales and ever-bigger venues. For rock writers, the real joy of Joe Bonamassa and Joanne Shaw Taylor's respective success stories has been watching these two modern blues figureheads grow as interviewees. Rewind to the millennium, when Bonamassa arrived with *A New Day Yesterday*, and the New Yorker was the epitome of the guitar geek caught in the headlights: comfortable enough talking about pickups and string gauges, cagey on anything else. Likewise, while promoting her 2009 debut album *White Sugar*, Taylor hinted at a snarky Black Country wit, but stopped short of showing her cards or character.

How long ago that seems now. Today he's on the talk circuit for his 17th album, *Breakthrough* (while she's flogging number 10, *Black & Gold*), and the pair have a reputation as the smartest, wittiest voices on a blues scene sometimes characterised as dour and overly reverential. Get these longtime friends together on a Zoom call, meanwhile – Taylor dialling in from her adopted Nashville hometown, Bonamassa from Copenhagen, smoking a cigar thicker than a toddler's arm – and they're even more fun, finishing each other's sentences, mercilessly taking the piss, and showing occasional flashes of genuine tenderness.

> **"Joe, why are there thirty apple-flavoured vodkas in your freezer?"**
>
> **Joanne Shaw Taylor**

Now that's what you call a cigar, Joe.

JST: He's in Tony Soprano mode.

JB: This is a 15 Robusto. Sorry I'm late joining the call. I was testing out the rig for the Black Country Communion tour.

You're great friends now , but what do you remember about your first meeting?

JB: It was at the Notodden Blues Festival in 2008. Which is amazing, but what it's telling me is that time is fucking flying. We ran into each other at the hotel check-in.

JST: And I offended you. Because you wanted to show me your really nice old Les Paul, and I just said: "I don't like Les Pauls" and walked off.

JB: And I said: "Ah, she's cool". Matter of fact I don't think she liked my music at all – which is why we bonded.

JST: [Deadpan] There are some covers you've done that I think were well-chosen.

JB: We became fast friends, kept in touch. The next time we saw each other was in New York.

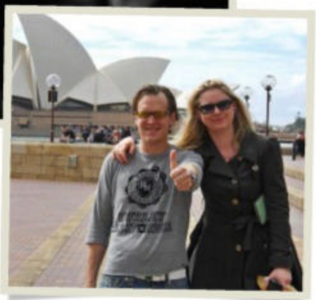
JST: We stayed up all night talking. You were the first person I'd met who had started at the same age. We weren't exactly child stars – we weren't Macaulay Culkin. But it was kind of weird to have your parents driving you up the motorway to gigs, aged thirteen, skipping days of school. So we had a lot to talk about. The next day, I got stranded in New Jersey and we just hung out until you finally got sick of me and shipped me off to Memphis.

What other early memories come to mind?

JST: Shortly after that time in New York, I had to drive myself from Maine to Detroit. So I started off on this twelve-hour drive, in the pitch-black, on the wrong side of the road. But Joe would phone and keep me company. I didn't have any money. And you'd say: "Okay, I've booked you into a nice Marriott, get a good night's sleep. Don't pull into some dodgy shithole." ▷

JOE BONAMASSA: PHILIP BARKER; JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR: STACIE HUCKEBA/PRESS

Competitive on stage, fiercely protective and supportive of each other off stage.



JB: I just want to correct one thing you said: "I was driving from Detroit on the wrong side of the road". No, it's the correct side of the road. You guys just don't get it.
JST: No, I meant I was literally driving on the left side. I could see headlights coming towards me.
JB: Oh shit. Well, then you were on the wrong side. I thought you were just digging on us.

Why do you think you clicked?
JB: We share a dry, cutting sense of humour. Joanne loves it when I go off, ranting and raving.
JST: And I poke the bear. There's also massive trust between us. That was a real benefit when Joe started producing me. We recorded *Fade Away*, which is about losing my mum, and he's one of the few people – because she passed away a long time ago – who's actually met her.
JB: When I met Joanne, my life had just changed. I'd played the Albert Hall for the first time. Next thing you know, there's more people waiting for a meet 'n' greet than were at the shows two years before. Things had got weird. I don't believe I handled the pressure very well. And Joanne got me through a lot of that.

What's the best night out you've had together?
JST: The thing is, if we meet for dinner we meet at four p.m. You know, the early-bird special. So our late-night drinking is: "Oh god, it's eight p.m., we should call it a night". With us it's mostly cigar bars. I used to be a heavy cigarette smoker, and I've turned the corner and can't imagine why I ever used to do it. But now I've started on the little cigars, because me and Joe went out and he was just rambling on, so at some point I thought: "Oh god, I'm going to have to start smoking, just so I've got something to entertain me for the next few hours".

In your careers, do you remember a moment when it felt like the boulder was starting to roll?
JB: My big moment was when I played that Albert Hall show, four days before my thirty-second birthday. What I learnt from that experience is, you never know what is going to change your life until it does. And when it does, look out. Because it happens fast. You've got to understand that you don't get to pick when it happens. Most people who have dedicated their lives to this horrible fucking business, when they get to twenty-seven and they've got nothing to show for it but eight hundred dollars of bills, they say to themselves: "If I don't make it by the time I'm thirty I'm gonna go do something else", right? But if I'd quit at thirty I would have been literally one year, eleven months and twenty-six days from achieving this whole lifetime of work.
JST: I think I've had lots of smaller boulders. And fortunately my boulder still seems to be getting bigger by increments. So there's been things like playing at the Diamond Jubilee and starting to work with Joe and Roy [Weisman, manager], which was always my dream.
JB: I always say that every avalanche starts with one snowball and then it cascades. You gotta stay in the game, take little victories. Like, every time Joanne goes into a market, she draws more people. There's growth. She's playing the right rooms, legitimate theatres. And going out there with a great bag of songs and a killer live show. To me, that's a big win.
JST: Women tend to make it later – Bonnie Raitt, y'know?
JB: Or Sheryl Crow. And you're not selling a gimmick. Even though you're a beautiful woman, Joanne…
JST: Finally. Seventeen years it took.
JB: …but you're not overtly selling the sexual element. You're selling the art. And that's what Bonnie Raitt did. That's what Lucinda did. That's what Sheryl did. And all these super-talented artists who were, like: "I don't want to get there on a gimmick or a picture".

Has the internet made people better or worse at playing guitar?
JST: Well, I think it's made them worse people.
JB: The internet gives out information, some bad, but mostly good. So kids can sit there at their leisure and get a lot better at a younger age than we did. Where the internet goes wrong is when it gets into 'Who's better?' Like, there's a video circulating of Eric Gales and I. We've been friends thirty years, and we both know that every time we get on stage together we're gonna give each other a black eye and a bloody nose. But of course it gets filmed and analysed: "Who's better?" What they don't understand is that [being a great live act] is so much more than just playing. I watched Buddy Guy at Montreux. He comes out with his intro music, the band's hot. He didn't have to do a fucking thing, except look at the audience and smile – and he had 'em in the palm of his hand. Until they can do that, people [on the internet] can shut the fuck up. Enjoy it or don't. If you don't like it, turn it off. Why sit there and argue?
JST: I think it's taken a lot of the fun out of it. I got the internet when I was, like, sixteen. So during the three years of hard-core studying before that, I had to cycle ten miles into Birmingham to Our Price and say: "I like this BB. King album, what else have you got?" And they'd go: "Well there's a Buddy Guy greatest hits we can order for you." So I'd cycle back in six weeks, then cherry-pick the bits I could learn. Whereas kids now are like: "I'm into Eric Johnson – and here's every single performance he's ever done in his lifetime, and all the videos of Eric teaching you how he did it". It's almost too much information. You don't get to put your own personality into it.

How about AI-generated music? It feels like the antithesis of everything blues is all about.
JST: Somebody said: "I want AI to do my cleaning and washing so I can focus on art, not AI to do my art so I've got more time to do my washing." It's great we have that technology in terms of healthcare. But I don't want an artificial Van Gogh.
JB: I think people can see through an AI-derived song. Y'know, someone's coming up with lyrics

WILL BYINGTON/PRESS x1; KIT WOOD/PRESS x3

“We are basically married. Just without any of the fun stuff,” says JST of any ‘couple’ rumours.

like *Blonde On Blonde*, and you’re like: “Well he either read Kerouac or he used ChatGPT”.

Do you worry about the day when titans like Buddy Guy leave us and you’re asked to step up?
JB: Who stepped up to replace Hendrix? Nobody. Who stepped up to replace BB King? Nobody.
JST: And the beautiful thing is they’re still there. There’s so many albums and bootlegs we can still hear. A good example is Stevie Ray Vaughan. He’s the reason I went down this road. I’ve never met the guy, he was gone by the time I discovered him. But he’s still giving so much to the genre.
JB: Every ten years, someone comes along. Just when the media says: “Is the blues dead?” – boom. Robert Cray in the eighties. Gary Moore in 1990. Kenny Wayne Shepherd. Jonny Lang. Gary Clark Jr. Kingfish. Marcus King. Every five to ten years, you get a new crop doing something different under the blues umbrella. It’ll never die, it’ll just sound different.

Presumably you’ll be checking out each other’s new albums?
JST: Well he’s on mine. Even if he went mad and put out the worst album of his life, I honestly would still think it’s the greatest thing he’s ever done, and I would champion it – and I will beat the crap out of anyone who says otherwise.
JB: Well thank you. And likewise. Hopefully you and I haven’t put out our worst albums ever. The best review I ever read was that prog supergroup GTR. Not that I care what *Rolling Stone* has to say about anything, but the review was just “TTL SHT”. That was it. But it was a good record.
JST: I like the weird reviews. I had one for *The Dirty Truth* [2014]. Every paragraph, the reviewer would go back to saying: “But at the end of the day, she can’t make decent blues music when her father is Shaw Taylor”. Joe, you might not get that reference. Shaw Taylor was a TV presenter in the seventies. I’ve never met the man, but this journalist just assumed he was my father and kept saying: “It’s a great album – but she’s grown up rich”.

ELLIOTT GRUENBERG/PRESS x1; SHARON CORBITT/PRESS x1

Has your surname helped or hindered you, Joe?
JB: My favourite question in the world has always been: “Is Bonamassa your real last name?” And my answer is: “No, my name is actually Joe Smith. But I figured the music business is so easy that I’d change my name to something that’s harder to pronounce and spell, just to make things fun and even the playing field”.

Aside from music, what else do you share?
JST: Two years ago, me and Joe got a little sausage dog called Hank. Joe is a massive dog fan, so I’ve gifted him a dog that he doesn’t have any responsibility for. He loves his uncle Joseph. But his uncle Joseph is a bit of a shit, because I give him dog food and Joe will give him an eighty-dollar kobe beef steak.

> **“Matter of fact, I don’t think she liked my music at all – which is why we bonded.”**
>
> **Joe Bonamassa**

What sort of exchanges do you have between you in a typical day?
JST: The problem for Joe is I’m a very passionate person. And if I meet someone who’s a horrible person in this industry, they are immediately on the ‘punch in the face’ list. And Joe just has to go along with it. So he gets a list from me: “Guess who’s on the shit-list today!”
JB: It’s like a briefing memo from MI5, the currently disavowed.

There’s a lingering suspicion that you two might secretly be a couple.
JST: We are basically married. Just without any of the fun stuff.
JB: Or the alimony.
JST: We live next-door to each other in Nashville. After this interview is done I’m walking to his apartment, because I noticed there’s a dead bird on his patio. So that’s our day-to-day life: taking care of shitty things for each other.
JB: Joanne, be a dear, set the air conditioning for seventy-two degrees.
JST: My problem is that Hank goes apeshit if someone next-door has the audacity to sneeze. So I can’t do interviews at home, so I go round to his. But then I’ve got to remember if the wifi password is ‘Gibson1959’ or ‘1959Gibson’.
JB: It’s on a little laminated plaque over the sink. By the good wine.
JST: If it was by the good wine, I might be round there more. You might be disappointed when you get home. Also, why are there thirty apple-flavoured vodkas in your freezer? Have you started making appletinis when you’re at home in your Nerdville pyjamas, you little weirdo?

This has been fun. Was it the first joint interview you’ve done?
JB: Yeah. I can’t believe we’ve never done anything like this before.
JST: It’s easier, actually.
JB: I’ve had, like, five interviews already today. Five! And it’s just these mundane questions: “What was it like playing with BB King?” And I’m like: “What do you think it was like?”
JST: So many journalists just repeat the press bio to you.
JB: And they want to do Zoom calls on camera. But then they ask these questions where thirty minutes seems like three hours. You gotta understand how this works. If you’re gonna ask questions like that, I’m gonna give you canned answers. But at least if we do it on the phone then I can doom-scroll my Twitter at the same time.

Joanne Shaw Taylor’s Black & Gold is available now via Journeyman Records. Joe Bonamassa’s Breakthrough is available now via J&R Adventures.

EVER MEET LEMMY?

Ronnie Dio pinched her cheeks, Wolfgang Van Halen took her to 5150, she's shared stages with Slash, Skid Row and Tom Keifer, given Rob Halford high heels for Christmas, bonded with Ann Wilson and Amy Lee… She's Lzzy Hale, and these are some of her stories.

Interview: **Emma Johnston**

They've won a Grammy, just as they've won over a legion of fans having made their pitch as one of the hardest-touring bands in the US. Now Halestorm are about to move up another gear with the release of their new album *Everest*, but the band members still have moments of giddy fandom that take them crashing back to their teenage years.

Brought up on a steady diet of classic rock, frontwoman Lzzy Hale has had countless opportunities to meet her heroes, often forming firm friendships, occasionally dissolving into a storm of fart jokes, and, on at least one occasion, bonding with a metal god over a shared love of high-heeled shoes.

LEMMY

I never met Lemmy, but we observed Lemmy doing his thing at the Rainbow in LA. We were kids, and we were too shy to go over and say hi, and he was busy playing his game on the corner of the bar. We're just kind of creepy, looking at him every now and again. This was before our debut album came out, he wouldn't have any idea who we were.

RONNIE JAMES DIO

We were driving through the East Coast in the US, and Heaven And Hell was performing in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Coheed And Cambria, the opening band, had dropped out of the last show of the tour, and my booking agent called and said: "Would you like to open up for Heaven And Hell?" I've always been a huge Dio fan. After the show we watched him sign everything for people and he still came walking over to our RV. I said: "We would have understood if you're just tired and want to go on your bus, but thank you for spending so much time with us". He says: "Lzzy, this is a moment in time. You're never going to remember all of the places you play or all the people you meet, but they are going to remember meeting you for the rest of their lives. So you make it good for everyone".

I assumed he was giving me advice for my own fan base. And then after he died, I thought: "Oh, he made that moment for me. He knew that I was a fan, and he made that happen". I'll never forget that. He was talking about my voice after the set, and pinched my cheeks, like: "You got it, kid". I felt like I'd been knighted or something.

ALICE COOPER

Everybody's awesome uncle! Alice Cooper was one of the first rockers I gravitated toward as a kid. I remember going to a sleepover in sixth grade and bringing his CD *Love It To Death*, and having all the girls be like: "You are an alien from outer space". I wasn't making a whole lot of friends that day. I told him that story, and he says: "I'm so proud that it was me that showed you that you were weird and that you weren't like the other girls". It was helpful to have somebody to look up to that wasn't afraid to own their weird.

On tour you'd see him walking out of the dressing room being Alice Cooper, fun-loving guy, and then change all of a sudden. His posture changed. He went from Coop to Alice Cooper. You saw the physical metamorphosis to this character. He wouldn't break that character until he's back in the dressing room. I remember him talking to me about the state of rock music, and he was like: "I think rock is always just where it needs to be. We're not supposed to be at the cool kids' table. We're in the basement gutter. We're locked in chains. They're too afraid to let us out because we're just going to take over the world. So we're exactly where we need to be".

> **"Tony is really calm and very cool, very regal. Geezer's very intellectual and a deep thinker."**

BLACK SABBATH

I've never met Ozzy, but having the opportunity to open up for Heaven And Hell in 2009 we got to meet Tony and Geezer. The first riff I ever learned on guitar was a Black Sabbath riff. The only reason that my name is spelled Lzzy is because of Ozzy. Tony is really calm and very cool, very regal. Geezer's very intellectual and a deep thinker. I remember all of them treating us like we were family. They know that they're responsible for you being a band, for you being into rock music. They understand that they're godfathers of heavy metal. They want to check in on this monster they've created in all of us.

SLASH

The first time we hung out with him it was a multiple-band bill. He stopped us in the parking lot because we had covered a Guns 'N Roses song [*Out Ta Get Me*] on one of our EPs. We had some gigs coming up in the Netherlands, and he asked me if I would want to come up and sing that song with him. You could see out ▷

JIMMY FONTAINE/PRESS

Left: Lzzy and Evanescence's Amy Lee in Nashville, June 2021. "From the first time we toured together, we were instantly connected."

Right: Lzzy and Heart's Ann Wilson. "A very sweet woman, very intelligent and deep thinking.

Below: Lzzy with Halestorm at the Trondheim Rocks festival in Norway, June 2025.

of the corner of the parking lot all these people getting out of their cars, just like zombies closing in. He's just standing there with his one bodyguard, and totally just wanted to hang out. You can see his bodyguard being like, we gotta go, and he was just oblivious. I'm like, we might want to take this inside, because we're seeing impending doom. You're gonna get mobbed here in a second.

I did have a bit of a fan-girl moment. We were on stage, and his shirt came off, and he came over to me doing his crab walk and doing the solo. And I was like: "What is life right now?" I reverted back to my sixteen-year-old self.

AMY LEE

From the first time we toured together, we were instantly connected, especially at that point where neither of us really were touring with any other females. She comes into my dressing room and she's like: "Hey, you do this song on your new album called *Break In*, but you don't do it with the guys. Can I come up and sing it?" So we ended up doing that every night. It was such a weird, deep cut on our record, too. I think it was testament to how much she loves new music and how much she supports her sisters in the business, because she didn't know me then.

We became really good friends, and it became tradition that we do this song together, and then we ended up re-recording it, doing our own version. She said: "*Break In* means something different to me now. It's no longer this love song between a man and a woman, it's more like, I'm your sister and I have your back no matter how dark it gets". The few proud females in rock and metal, we're not in competition with each other, there's no fights. We support each other, because we know how hard it is. She knows exactly how I feel and it gives me validation.

ANN WILSON

She was one of the first female voices that really blew open the doors for me. One of the first CDs that I gravitated towards in the nineties was [Heart's '95 live album] *The Road Home*. When I got to talk to Ann Wilson, I told her: "When I listened to your rendition of *Crazy On You* on that album, it showed me the kind of singer that I could potentially be if I stuck with it and I took care of myself. It was very, very inspiring. I saw myself reflected in your voice". And it's so funny, because she turned to me and she's like: "We hated that album! Isn't that a crazy thing? How, even the things that maybe you think are trivial can change the life of somebody else completely that you've never met?" She's a very sweet woman, very intelligent and deep thinking.

TOM KEIFER

My guitar player, Joe [Hottinger], and his guitar player had met at Guitar Center and exchanged numbers. Joe knows exactly how I feel about Tom Keifer: I was going to marry him when I was a kid, head over heels. Joe puts down a little note and says: "This is Tom Keifer's number. He wants you to call him to talk about doing a duet in New Jersey for his solo project". So I called up Tom, and he asked me: "Would you sing and perform Jeff's [La Bar] part on *Nobody's Fool*?" We get to the show, and I tripped up over one of

TOP LEFT: MARK HUMPHREY/ALAMY; TOP RIGHT: © CRISS CAIN; BOTTOM: PER OLE HAGEN/REDFERNS

Lzzy with Halestorm.

JIMMY FONTAINE/PRESS

the notes, and I was so apologetic about it. He's like: "Oh, whatever. You didn't mess it up. You played a different note. Jeff never played it the same way twice either". He made me feel so at ease. He's one of those calm, cool, collected guys that holds court. He walks into a room and the air changes, because you know that somebody of note is there.

SKID ROW

I got to know Rachel [Bolan] and Snake [Sabo] as people first before we ended up gigging together. I've been a Skid Row fan since I was eleven, just trying my damnedest to hit those high notes. When they asked me to be a part of it we were at a mutual friend's birthday party, and it got brought up over cake. The thing that I discovered was when we were on the bus together, it doesn't matter how old you are on the outside. On the inside, including myself, we are all fifteen-year-old boys. The fart jokes were rampant. We were making all these Spinal Tap jokes about the meat in catering. They're like, the meat is so sweaty. I don't know why it was so funny, but this sweaty meat came up a lot, and then that ends up being a dirtier and dirtier joke. I'm so grateful for them accepting me into their camp and for allowing me to be a part of that.

WOLFGANG VAN HALEN

He's a humble kid, there's none of that "I'm a rock star's kid" stuff. I've met quite a few of those guys that think that they're better than everybody else because their dad was famous. That's never been Wolfie. He took us to 5150 and it still had all the tapes up there. There was *Jump*, the old analogue tapes, everything marked, everything organised to a T. And we're like: "Are we supposed to be in here?" He's like: "Oh yeah, dad won't mind". I'm like, this isn't just anybody's dad's garage! I think he and his band are gonna save rock'n'roll. He's a part of that small club of rock stars that are like: "Hey, you are more than welcome to be a part of this cool thing that we're doing, but we don't need you, we're gonna do it anyway."

> **"Myles Kennedy is an angel sent from on high. The most down-to-earth man."**

ALTER BRIDGE

They are the hardest-working people in the world, and Myles Kennedy is an angel sent from on high. The first time we went out with them, I had gotten a cold on tour. We were doing a duet together, and I ended up having to drop out one day because I had just gotten really sick, and I didn't want him to catch it. Every day, he'd be like: "Here's some tea", and "Are you drinking enough water?" Just being like this doting big brother. He's the most down-to-earth man.

ROB HALFORD

We got to meet and perform with Judas Priest in Auckland, New Zealand. I was wearing these eight-inch spiky high heels, and I was telling Rob: "I can't believe you do eleven leather jacket changes". He's like: "Oh, I'm just trying to be like Cher". And he looks at my high heels and he's like: "I wish I could wear those". So about a month later, around Christmas time, I found some eight-inch spiky high heels that were the exact same ones that I wore, but in a men's size. I sent them to him for Christmas. He's got his cane, so I did tell him this may be for just horizontal use only. He ended up posing in them online and writing me a nice note back. Just a little fashion situation there with Rob Halford.

Everest is out on August 8 via Atlantic Records. Halestorm tour the UK November 20-26.

Using My Religion

Christian rock was crucified in the eighties. **Wytch Hazel** may be believers, but their righteous influences and almighty folk metal rocks harder than Gabriel's judgement day trumpet herald.

Words: **Polly Glass**

Wytch Hazel get on famously with Satan. A kinship forged in the club nights and all-dayers of the heavy metal underground scene, it's just one way in which the Biblically inclined rockers subvert expectations – cheerfully pushing back against notions that faith and the devil's music can't be friends.

Of course, we're talking about Satan the 80s metal stalwarts from Newcastle upon Tyne, not Beelzebub himself.

"They're great, I love those guys!" Wytch Hazel's singer/guitarist and mastermind Colin Hendra enthuses. "I remember we were at Muskelrock and Satan played, and then we played, and then Antichrist played straight after us. I thought that was quite funny."

Hendra, 33, is calmly open about his Christian faith in a thoughtful, grounded way not always seen in religious public figures. It's a refreshing counterpoint to the (by no means unfounded) assumption that the God-fearing come with a certain amount of baggage.

Hendra doesn't actually call himself "religious", and he certainly doesn't call Wytch Hazel a Christian rock band. Back home near Morecambe, his 'charismatic' church feels more like a family, he says.

"I can see people would say if you go to church, read the Bible and pray, those are religious things," he muses. "Whereas for me, if I say 'I'm in a relationship with God', that's very different to 'I'm going to do some Hail Marys' or something. I feel like the experience of being in relation to God is this spiritual thing. When I think of 'religion' I think of rules and rituals, and it kind of rubs me up the wrong way. It works for some people and that's fine, but I can't get on board with organised religion."

> **"There's a side of me that secretly enjoys upsetting people."**
>
> **Colin Hendra**

We're backstage at London's 02 Indigo, ahead of the release of the new Wytch Hazel album *V: Lamentations*. Painstakingly recorded with longtime producer Ed Turner (formerly of psychedelic rockers Purson), it's a classy, absorbing listen, seamlessly marrying faith-based lyrics with riffy classic rock and heavy metal textures of yore.

In a couple of hours they'll play stirring mid-tempo bangers *Woven* and *Healing Power* (the album's first two singles) when they open for Michael Schenker's My Years With UFO tour. Their stage gear of crucifixes and white spandex – gold for Hendra, with a cape to match – are shut away for now, along with ivy and chalices to adorn their amps. It's all very Jethro Tull-meets-Iron Maiden, with a touch of Rick Wakeman.

"It's not a safe genre or look, but at the same time it's difficult because this is a hundred per cent me," he says simply. "Wytch Hazel is everything I want to do musically."

As work began on *V: Lamentations* Hendra was juggling band gigs, family life and teaching (he's a drum tutor, and also teaches guitar and ukelele in schools) with a long, exacting recording process, all mingled with the lingering anxiety of lockdown.

It took a tremendous toll on his mental and physical health. Chronic exhaustion ensued, along with vocal problems and bursitis (a kind of painful fluid build-up) in his shoulder . In 2022 he couldn't make it through their Bloodstock set. All the while his faith began to falter.

"Every day I was waking up in pain, and it was all over my body, my stress was at an all-time high," he recalls. "It was really disappointing, the *worst* gig to not go well. But I think at some point you just hit a wall."

It also cast doubt over his faith; the sincere heart of Wytch Hazel's music, which lends an emotive soulfulness to their NWOBHM-honed hooks and swashbuckling Wishbone Ash-via-Thin Lizzy twin leads. He began to question everything. "I think I was slipping into nihilism, sort of like 'maybe nothing really matters after all'."

Having dug into introspective lyrical territory for 2023's *IV: Sacrament*, he was ready to channel these experiences on *V: Lamentations* – always putting the music first, free of agenda beyond making people feel something, whatever their beliefs, as good art should.

"It's not like: 'We're a project to save souls', it's art. You're not setting up a ministry. Some people say they have a 'ministry of music', and that's great, I just don't get it at all. If you make music it's because you want to make the best art you possibly can, and you want to strive for excellence."

That focus goes back to his childhood, where music and church were integral. Growing up Hendra looked forward to Sundays. He played drums in services at his local Baptist church, and began attending youth Bible camps.

"Painfully shy" in school, he struggled with all subjects except music. It became a singular obsession: "I've always been obsessed with music. Right through school, I was in any band possible: the wind band, Morecambe Brass Band, a trad jazz band, there was a chamber choir, and I just got involved with them all."

In his teens he joined local metal band Lake Of Fire, having fallen hard for Iron Maiden's *Number Of The Beast* as well as the likes of Black Sabbath, Dio and Wishbone Ash, plus the Scripture he was ingesting through church. It all began to cross-pollinate, planting seeds for Wytch Hazel. This didn't sit well with some of the staunchly conservative leaders at Bible camp – and that was fine by Hendra.

"There's a side of me that secretly enjoys upsetting people," he says, grinning, "so I kind of enjoyed how it upset the conservative Christians around me. I've got a lot more time for atheists and people who are against religion, to be honest, than people who are conservative."

Meanwhile, he and his future wife met at their university's Christian Union. They married straight after graduating and now have two children, aged five and eight.

On stage at the Indigo, a light seems to come on. Hendra and his three late-20s/early-30s bandmates – earlier in metal T-shirts and black jeans – turn into rock stars as they put on a tight, charismatic rock show, cheerfully fearless in their angelic threads.

Overall, Hendra says, they've had fewer insults than expected. Across Europe they've topped the bills of mini-festivals and played headline shows to metal crowds who 'get' them, in a way that not all UK punters do.

"We were at the 02 Ritz in Manchester, and some guy said to me: 'You guys would be an amazing band, if you wore jeans and T-shirts'," he says, laughing incredulously. "I said: 'Really? We've got this giant backdrop with a big cross, a chalice, ivy on the amps... and you want us to play in jeans and T-shirts?!' It just doesn't make sense."

People tend to see friction between faith and rock'n'roll. And yet we often describe music – especially live music – as a religious experience. That sense of finding liberation in something bigger than yourself, whether that's God, nature, movement, or hearing music. Sounds you feel, viscerally, but can't see. A searing, powerful thing that we all interpret a little differently. Maybe it pushes us outside our comfort zone. If that's not a religious experience, I'm not sure what is.

"I think God gives us choice and free will," Hendra adds. "But then he also says: 'Look, music's in the world, it's just a gift.' I feel like most people would say, whether they believe in God or not, it *does* feel like a gift." ●

V: Lamentations is out now via Bad Omen Records.

ELLY LUCAS/PRESS

HERE COMES THE RAIN

For **The Black Keys**, 2024 is a year they'd like to forget. But with a new outlook and approach feeding into new album *No Rain, No Flowers,* they're hoping 2025 will be one to remember.

Words: **Paul Rees**

Dan Auerbach and Patrick Carney, collectively The Black Keys, couldn't telegraph their present state of mind any clearer than they do on the opening, and title, track of their forthcoming thirteenth album together. Chiming keyboards usher in a ringing guitar melody, a gambolling rhythm on its heels. The first words out Auberach's mouth on the record are: '*Let it go... You've got to let it all go*'.

If that wasn't specific enough, there's the title itself: *No Rain, No Flowers*. After their well-documented annus-horribilis of 2024, which included an aborted US arena tour, a stillborn album, *Ohio Players*, and then their wholesale firing of their managers (industry heavyweights Irving Azoff and Steve Moir) and publicist, it casts the pair as somewhat more world-weary but nonetheless defiant after the storm. All the more emphatic for the backdrop being an irresistible three-minute pop-rock confection.

> **"There's a reason the music business is considered a slimy hellhole."**
>
> **Patrick Carney**

In total, *No Rain, No Flowers* conveys as an act of bloodied but unbowed will. As with each Keys album from 2011's major breakthrough *El Camino*, it was made at Auerbach's Easy Easy Studio in Nashville, their adopted home town since 2010. It was started last July, just two months on from the tour debacle,and its 11 box-fresh songs came together on the spot, in the room.

As has also become typical practice for them, Auerbach and Carney bounced off collaborators. In this case a trio of songwriter-producers, Daniel Tashian, Scott Storch and Rick Nowells, respectively well-known for their work with Kacey Musgraves, Dr Dre and Beyoncé, and on Lana Del Rey's *Ultraviolence* album of 2014, a record co-produced by Auerbach. The overall mood of their labours is best described by Auerbach as "sad pop", which is to say wistful lyrics matched with pointedly upbeat music. Or put another way, what's become standard issue from The Black Keys.

"No matter who we let into our world, essentially what happens is those people go through our filter," says Auerbach. "What comes out the other side is always us, no matter what. Ultimately, we went through a traumatic experience last year. We were definitely tested, stretched to our limits. What brought us back together is the same thing as always, which is getting to play music with each other. It was a reminder to trust our guts."

"There's a reason the music business is considered a slimy hellhole," Carney, the spikier of the two, avers. "Be careful who you trust. I wish the work was just making the songs and playing the shows, but it's also worrying about who you're working with, and every venue you're playing, and ticket prices... And it all comes down to the band. No one is going to be as passionate about it as the two guys in the band, but you have to maintain a level of hyper-vigilance, or else it's gonna get fucked up."

Today Auerbach and Carney are in Bose, Idaho, tonight being the fifth date of a North American tour warming up to the album's August release. The venues they're playing are outdoor amphitheatres and theatres, scaled down and a better fit for their music. The two men are a study in contrasts. Carney sits himself outdoors, his Zoom camera on, his white 'Playboy' sweatshirt vivid against a milk-blue sky. Auerbach's camera remains off, though by the sounds of things he's holed up in a hotel room. One suspects he'd be tricky to read in any circumstance, such is his straight-bat reserve, and the general measure of his words. Carney is more all out, animated and talkative, his otherwise laconic drawl punctuated by occasional exclamations of ire, one hand spiralling a cigarette around his head for added effect.

Drummer Carney describes singer/guitarist Auerbach as "confident in his vision. He doesn't give up, and he's always had that mentality". Carney, says Auerbach, is a natural born leader, "and when he decides to take control and steers the ship, everything ▷

LARRY NIEHUES/PRESS

BELLE
MEADE

seems to go well. When it comes to business, I trust Pat to look at it from every angle, and especially the one I didn't think about".

They grew up two doors apart in Akron, Ohio, a blue-collar town, population under 200,000 and best known for being the tyre capital of America. There wasn't so much as a rock club in town when Auerbach, captain of the Firestone High soccer team, and Carney, the school's resident outcast, first started playing music together in 1996. Both of them went on to, and dropped out of, the University of Akron, and formed The Black Keys as a duo in 2001.

A musical line ran through each of their families. Auerbach's cousin, Robert Quine, played art-rock guitar for Lou Reed and John Zorn. Carney's uncle, Ralph Carney, blew sax on a bunch of Tom Waits records. A six-song demo, raw, bluesy and not so original, landed them a deal with a tiny indie label, Alive, for whom they made their 2002 debut album, *The Big Come*, on an eight-track machine in Carney's basement.

By their own telling, their early musical template was "weird Americana songs and spooky ballads", interspersed with the odd Captain Beefheart cover. They took jobs mowing lawns to fund their first tour, and graduated to a bigger indie, Fat Possum, for 2003's *Thickfreakness*, made over a single 14-hour session back in Carney's basement.

"It was hard, but exciting too," Carney says of this formative period. "Because at least back then there were still markers, even very small ones, that would indicate to you that someone was paying attention. Whether it was a small review in a magazine, or you'd walk into a record store and the clerk's playing your song. A lot of these things that don't really happen any more."

They made gradual progress, but maintained an upward curve. In 2004 they played at Coachella and Bonnaroo and signed to a major label, Nonesuch. Yet 2006's *Magic Potion* was another basement job. In parallel with them but going faster was another blues-rock duo out of Detroit, the White Stripes. The Stripes had a definite schtick – their red/white uniform – and with Jack and Meg White's 'were they weren't they siblings' act, an air of self-styled mystery. The Keys were T-shirts and jeans, the jock and the geek. Rock critics salivated over the Stripes, and gave the Keys shit for licensing their songs to advertisers.

"There are a lot of false prophets in this business," says Auerbach. "People who want to give you advice, and really they have no experience or any fucking idea what they're talking about. There was this whole indie-rock credibility thing that was rampant in the music industry at the time."

"The single worst piece of advice we ever got as a band was basically: don't allow a song into a commercial," says Carney. "It put this whole thing in our heads of worrying about what other people were going to say, rather than paying attention to the fact our music isn't on the radio, and this was a way for people to hear our shit. And we could also maybe pay some fucking bills."

The Keys' gear change began as a planned comeback album for Ike Turner. Auerbach and Carney were tapped up to play on it by its appointed producer, Danger Mouse, né Brian Burton. Burton had just then hit big himself as half, and mastermind, of pop-soul duo Gnarls Barkley, who had a ubiquitous worldwide No.1 with their first single, *Crazy*. Turner's record never took off, but Auerbach and Carney convinced Burton to make one with them instead.

Attack & Release, No.14 on the *Billboard* Hot 200 and an all-round sharpening of the Keys' teeth, blazed out in 2008. In its aftermath, Carney went through a bitter divorce from his college sweetheart, Denise Grollmus, while Auerbach made a well-received solo record, *Keep It Hid*.

The Keys rolled on with Danger Mouse. In 2010 the three of them made the even more tightly honed *Brothers*, recorded at the storied Muscle Shoals studio in rural Alabama and peaking with their most urgent song to that point, *Howlin' For You*, a nagging, three-minute blues-rock tour de force. The album sold well over a million copies and made their name. The year-long tour they undertook on the back of it almost broke them.

LARRY NIEHUES/PRESS

"We never had to be taught how to work hard. We had to be taught how to take a rest."

Dan Auerbach

"Danger Mouse really helped with arrangement stuff, and it was inspiring, and all these opportunities started coming our way, but it was also a very stressful, tense time," says Carney. "We were supposed to go play the Big Day Out in Australia in January 2011. Our managers told us: 'You're going to have to put on a bigger production, and you'll be down there three weeks, and you won't make any money.' We were like: 'Well fuck that'.

"We were fried. Dan and I decided to pay Big Day Out $180,000 to not go. Then we called Danger Mouse and asked him if he wanted to come to Nashville and make another record with us at Dan's new studio."

El Camino, which took shape over the spring of 2011, remains the definitive Black Keys statement. Eleven songs, 38 minutes running time, no fat, and a pair of pulsating aces for its signature tracks *Lonely Boy* and *Gold On The Ceiling.* Auerbach says they approached it "knowing we needed to play bigger places. The demand was there".

"Danger Mouse said: 'You're going to need a couple of arena-sized songs – they're going to have to be a little faster,'" Carney continues. "I realised we'd never actually written a fast song. I had to learn how to play the drums differently, but it was fun.

"When we'd finished the record, I loved it, but I wasn't sure about it. That June we played Bonnaroo again, and The Strokes played, and some of those guys came over to my house that Sunday. We were hanging out, and I played Fab (Moretti) and Albert (Hammond Jr) the album we'd just had mastered. They were both like: 'Holy shit!' That was the first time I thought we might have an actual hit on our next record."

El Camino rocketed, peaking at No.2 on the *Billboard* chart. The Keys set off on their first US arena tour, having sold out their prestigious New York date at Madison Square Garden in 15 minutes flat. The ensuing emotional fallout was once more bruising. Auerbach went through a divorce of his own (both he and Carney would re-marry and divorce again; Carney is now on his third marriage to fellow musician Michelle Branch).

Their next record, 2014's *True Blue*, was their first US No.1, but it was more awkward and without the staying power of its predecessor. It was also their last to date with Danger Mouse. After yet another mammoth tour, The Black Keys principals retreated to Nashville to tend their wounds.

"When you get to the point where it's more exciting to have a day off than be playing Madison Square Garden, that's when you know you're working too much," says Carney. "You know, do you really want to be on the road nine months a year when you could be at home, making records for other people, and sleeping in your own bed? So we put the brakes on shit for a couple of years."

"We never had to be taught how to work hard," Auerbach reasons. "We had to be taught how to take a rest."

In the event their hiatus stretched to four years. Auerbach formed a side band, The Arcs, and made a record with them, *Yours, Dreamily*, and a second blues-based solo album, *Waiting On A Song*, in 2017. Carney kept busy producing Branch and also Karen Elson, Jack White's ex-wife. When they did get back together it was into a markedly different world, characterised by streaming, clickbait, Tik Tok and short attention spans, one nothing like so receptive to the rarefied class of veteran rock bands the Keys now occupy.

Furthering their sense of old-school-ness, the Keys have gone on and made five albums in six

Auerbach (left) and Carney: reconciled to going back to being outsiders and interlopers.

LARRY NIEHUES/PRESS

years, up to and including *No Rain, No Flowers*. 2019's *Let's Rock* was self-produced and effortless-sounding. After it came *Delta Kream*, a solid collection of trad-blues covers, and 2022's so-so *Dropout Boogie*. Then the intermittently excellent but ill-fated *Ohio Players*. Their sales have, unsurprisingly, slowed, but they've found kinship with other artists operating out of Nashville, the likes of Chris Stapleton and Jason Isbell, "rooted in the same type of thing and one hundred per cent coming from the same place as us", as Auerbach puts it.

"There's a lot of careers you could look at as a cool way to get to 50-plus and still be doing rock'n'roll and making something interesting," says Carney. "I mean, a band like Radiohead is a good one to consider. We navigated this shit from Akron. To go from there to figuring out how to headline Lollapalooza…

"I guess it's also the reason there's been five albums in six years. If you want to go sell concert tickets, and for someone to be a fan of what you're doing, then do shit. Make shit. Our biggest fear is being an unproductive band."

One of the positive by-products of last year's upheavals has been the mushrooming of the Keys' Record Hang events. All-vinyl dance parties, at which Auerbach, Carney and friends DJ, these are going ahead at selected stops on the current tour. The process of researching and compiling their Hang playlists did, they say, very much feed into and influence the 'don't bore us, get to the chorus' approach to the new record.

"Going back and playing stuff from the sixties and through the mid-seventies, there's an art of economy with whatever's happening in the arrangement," says Carney. "Not a lot of wasted space. That's definitely worn off on us. It's fun, too, because now as we're playing these new songs of ours live we're like: 'Shit, it's only two minutes long. There's room for a solo!'"

> **"We went through a traumatic experience last year. We were stretched to our limits."**
>
> **Dan Auerbach**

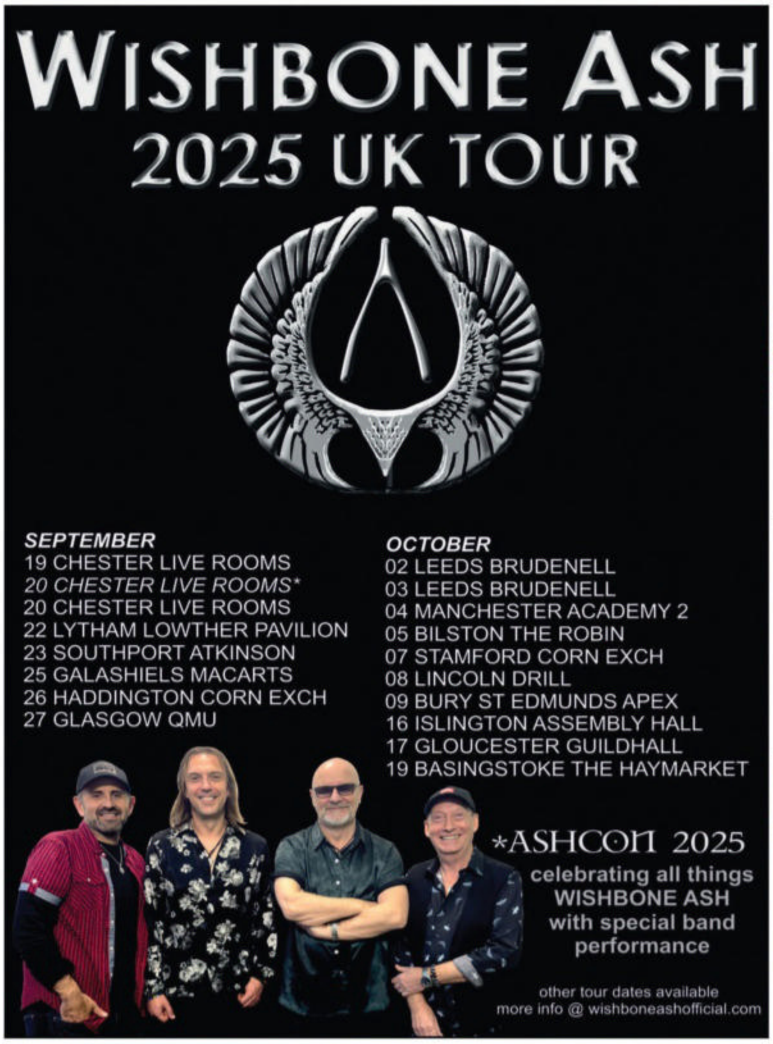
Besides a palpable quiet satisfaction with the new album, neither Auerbach nor Carney express too much, if any, concern with how it will fare once it goes out into the wider world. Beaten up they may have been, but both seem reconciled to their going back to being outsiders and interlopers.

Carney claims not to listen to Top 40 radio these days. "I know what Dua Lipa looks like on stage, and that's as far as I get to understanding the mainstream," he says. Auerbach offers that the two of them have made a career out of "following our own interests and dedicated our lives to serving our audience. We're on tour. We're playing sold-out shows in amazing places like Red Rocks. Our band feels tighter than ever, and the creative juices are flowing non-stop."

Showtime in Bose is looming. Ask them, in conclusion, what's been the biggest lesson they've absorbed on their meandering journey together, and both men pause. Then Carney at last pipes up: "To this day, twenty-four years in, we're getting people offering advice like you guys should do this, and that, and it's going to take a couple of months of your lives, and it's not going to make you money, but it'll be so fucking cool. Everyone else, the manager, the agent, the venue, the crew, they'll get paid, but for Dan and me… Whereas the advice we both could have used would be: 'Break up with your college girlfriend.'"

"That and 'take the money for the mayonnaise commercial… and spend it on a new girlfriend,'" Auerbach interjects. "That's advice I'd take." ●

No Rain, No Flowers is out on August 8 via Parlophone.



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SEPTEMBER
19 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
*20 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS**
20 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
22 LYTHAM LOWTHER PAVILION
23 SOUTHPORT ATKINSON
25 GALASHIELS MACARTS
26 HADDINGTON CORN EXCH
27 GLASGOW QMU

OCTOBER
02 LEEDS BRUDENELL
03 LEEDS BRUDENELL
04 MANCHESTER ACADEMY 2
05 BILSTON THE ROBIN
07 STAMFORD CORN EXCH
08 LINCOLN DRILL
09 BURY ST EDMUNDS APEX
16 ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
17 GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
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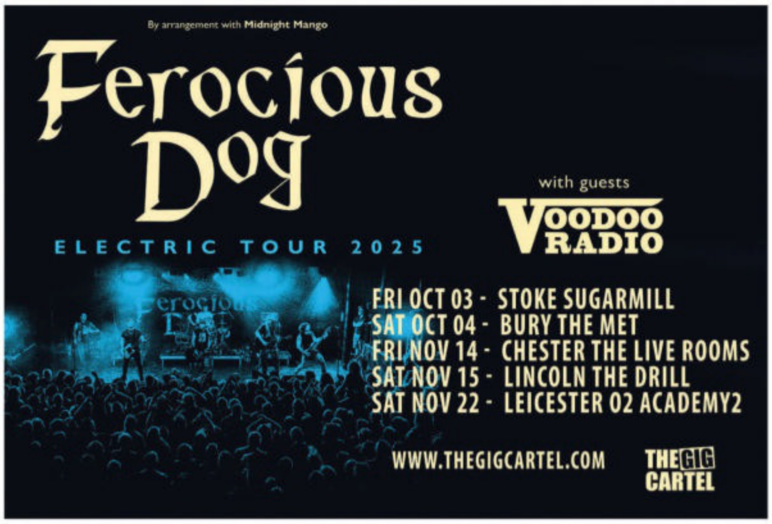

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Ferocious Dog

ELECTRIC TOUR 2025

with guests
VOODOO RADIO

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SAT OCT 04 - BURY THE MET
FRI NOV 14 - CHESTER THE LIVE ROOMS
SAT NOV 15 - LINCOLN THE DRILL
SAT NOV 22 - LEICESTER O2 ACADEMY2

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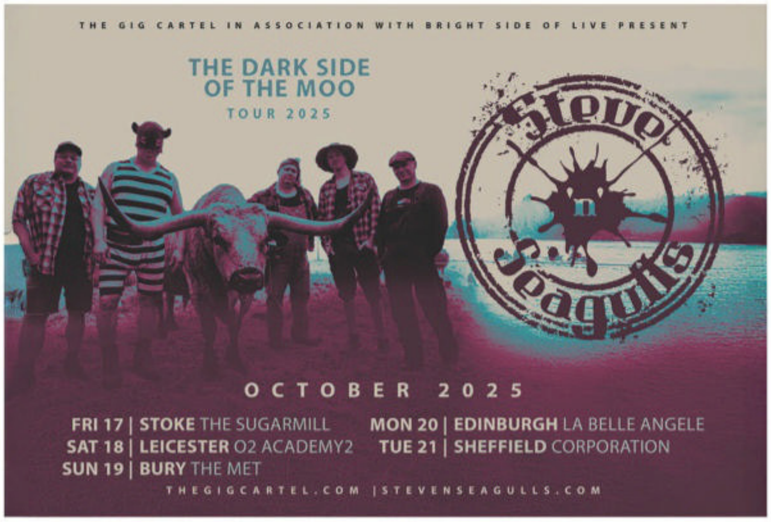

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THE DARK SIDE
OF THE MOO
TOUR 2025

Steve 'n' Seagulls

OCTOBER 2025

FRI 17 | **STOKE** THE SUGARMILL
SAT 18 | **LEICESTER** O2 ACADEMY2
SUN 19 | **BURY** THE MET
MON 20 | **EDINBURGH** LA BELLE ANGELE
TUE 21 | **SHEFFIELD** CORPORATION

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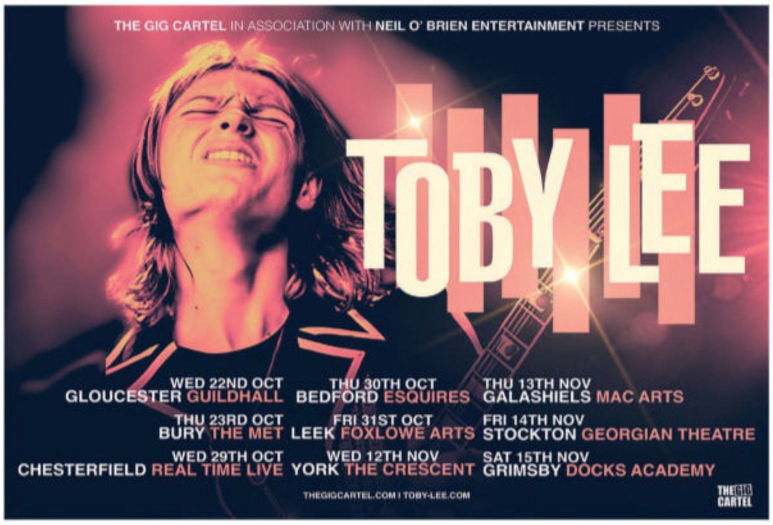

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WED 22ND OCT
GLOUCESTER GUILDHALL
THU 23RD OCT
BURY THE MET
WED 29TH OCT
CHESTERFIELD REAL TIME LIVE
THU 30TH OCT
BEDFORD ESQUIRES
FRI 31ST OCT
LEEK FOXLOWE ARTS
WED 12TH NOV
YORK THE CRESCENT
THU 13TH NOV
GALASHIELS MAC ARTS
FRI 14TH NOV
STOCKTON GEORGIAN THEATRE
SAT 15TH NOV
GRIMSBY DOCKS ACADEMY

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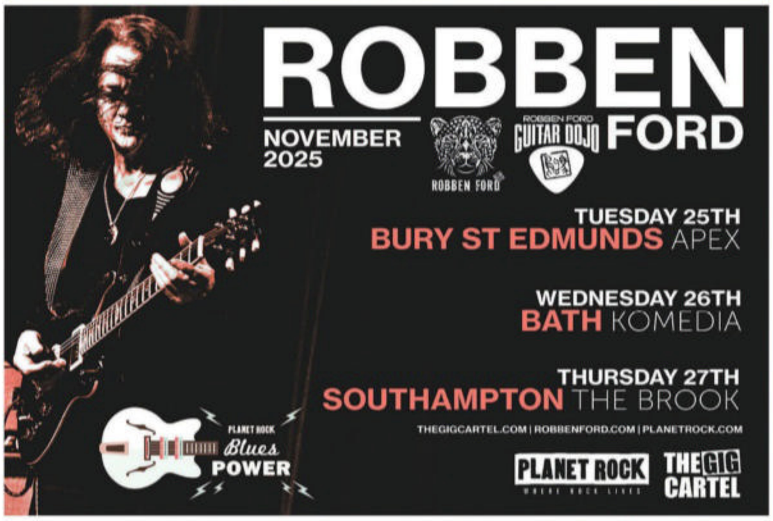

ROBBEN FORD

NOVEMBER
2025

ROBBEN FORD GUITAR DOJO

TUESDAY 25TH
BURY ST EDMUNDS APEX

WEDNESDAY 26TH
BATH KOMEDIA

THURSDAY 27TH
SOUTHAMPTON THE BROOK

PLANET ROCK Blues POWER

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PLANET ROCK
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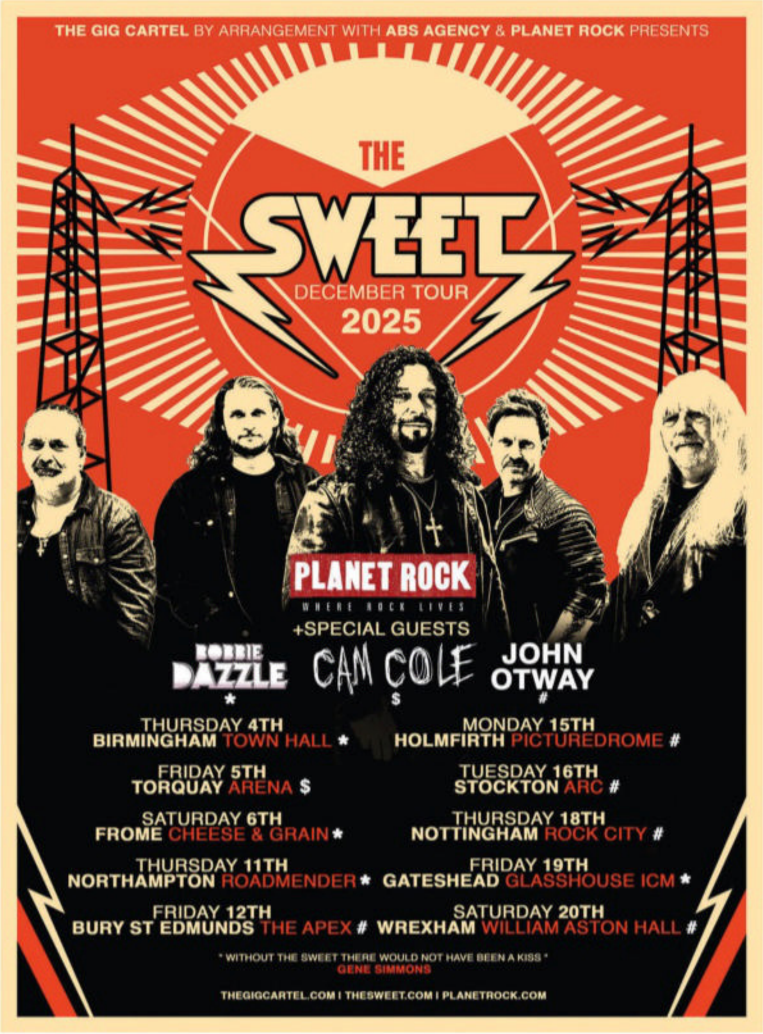

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TORQUAY ARENA $

SATURDAY **6TH**
FROME CHEESE & GRAIN *

THURSDAY **11TH**
NORTHAMPTON ROADMENDER *

FRIDAY **12TH**
BURY ST EDMUNDS THE APEX #

MONDAY **15TH**
HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME #

TUESDAY **16TH**
STOCKTON ARC #

THURSDAY **18TH**
NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY #

FRIDAY **19TH**
GATESHEAD GLASSHOUSE ICM *

SATURDAY **20TH**
WREXHAM WILLIAM ASTON HALL #

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GENE SIMMONS

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14 PAGES

100% ROCK

EDITED BY IAN FORTNAM

ian.fortnam@futurenet.com

CLASSIC ROCK RATINGS

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P72 ALBUMS
P82 REISSUES
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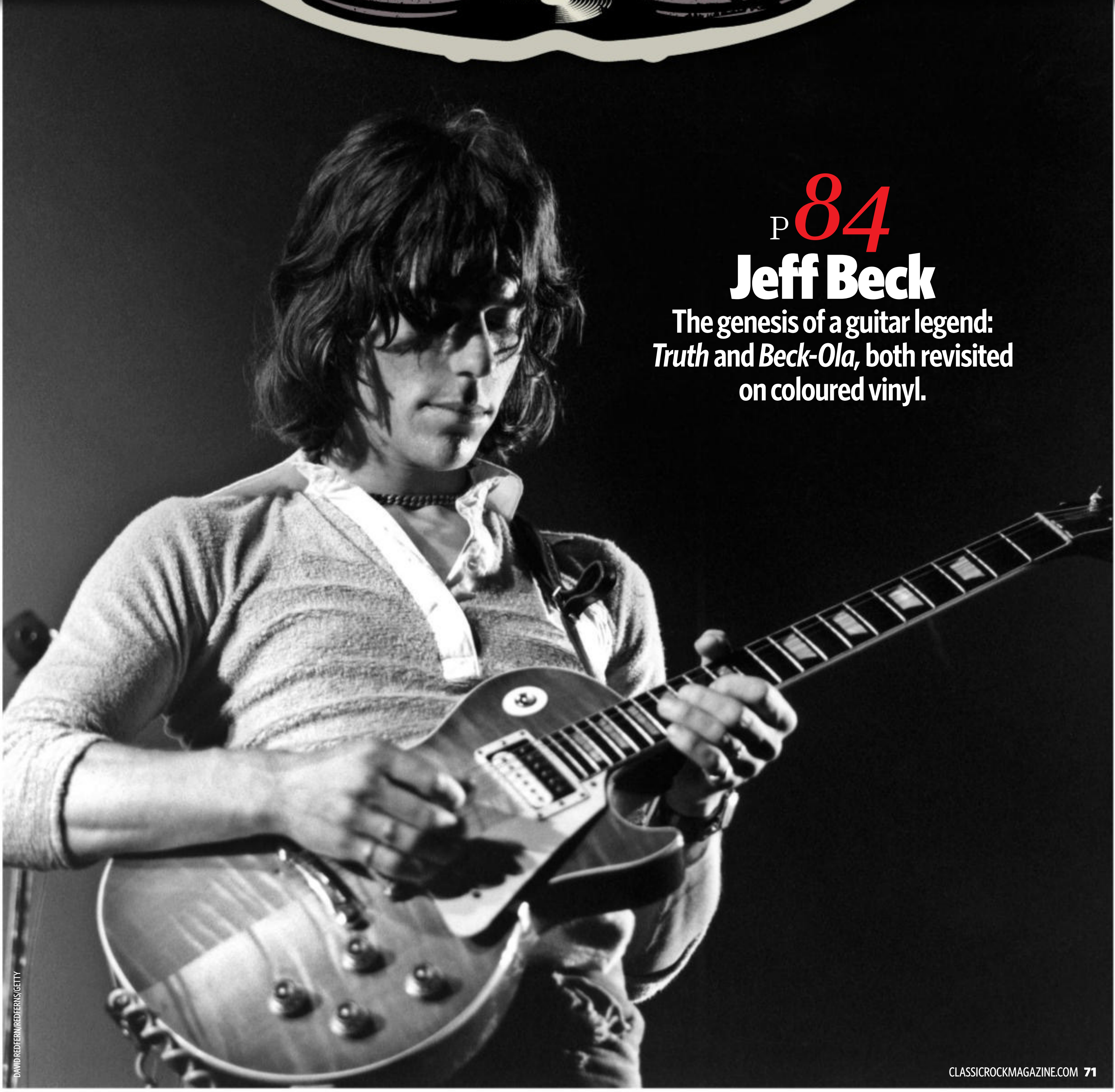

P84

Jeff Beck

The genesis of a guitar legend: *Truth* and *Beck-Ola*, both revisited on coloured vinyl.

DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS/GETTY

JENNY RISHER/PRESS

Alice Cooper

The Revenge Of Alice Cooper EARMUSIC

The Revenge of Alice Cooper
"The Return Album The World Was Afraid Of"

Original Alice Cooper group reunite for first full album in more than 50 years.

There've been teasers, live showcases across Alice's 2017 UK tour, a brace of tracks on 2021's *Detroit Stories*, but the four surviving original Alice Cooper group alumni haven't recorded a full studio album together since 1974's *Muscle Of Love*. Until now.

Bassist Dennis Dunaway, drummer Neal Smith and rhythm guitarist Michael Bruce have long indicated their willingness to embark upon such a project, but Alice took his time fully warming to the notion. Obviously, he'd the most to lose, but a feeling that things could never be the same without lead guitarist Glen Buxton - who died in '97 - proved hard to shake. Ultimately, though, following numerous warm-ups and dry runs, the time seemed right. After all, with 80 on the near horizon for everyone involved, if not now, when?

Bob Ezrin's a shoo-in producer, as much an architect of the AC sound as anyone. Having him man the board for this long-anticipated return is a no-brainer, and he recreates their signature sonic landscape with chutzpah to spare. But lead guitarist? Glen Buxtons don't exactly grow on trees.

Enter dirty-blond glam-slag Gyasi Heus, perhaps not as fag-dangling, square-jawed and pugilistic as Buxton, but thankfully more product of garage than of the Vai Academy.

The Revenge... clocks in at 16 tracks (in the 70s four would have been bound for B-sides and the album would've been better for it, but here we are). Discount the fillers, which are still of high, if throwaway, quality and you've a strong 12-banger cracker of a record. Lead single *Black Mamba* recalls *The Black Widow*, all menacing vocal melodrama and understated Robby Krieger cameo, current pull-out *Wild Ones* (the first Dunaway co-written AC single since *Under My Wheels*) ups the tempo and finds Gyasi proving his worth in style, while priapic rocker *Up All Night* finds Alice insisting, over a serpentine Mike Bruce riff, that he can '*keep it up all night*' – bold talk for a 77-year-old. *Kill The Flies* places AC in straitjacketed, institutionalised Dwight Fry comfort zone, *Blood On The Sun* is prog-leaning Killer Coop in excelsis - the ensemble work during its central guitar solo is simply majesterial. *Return Of The Spiders 2025* takes *School's Out* down a loose-ass *Slick Black Limousine* back alley before *Pretties For You* escapee *Titanic Overunderture* neatly closes the AC career circle. There's so much more here, but I've said enough already.

Get your wallet out, man, you're a long time dead.

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Ian Fortnam

Namazu

Ice 800 GOLDEN ROBOT

Mini-album from rabble-rousing Tennessee thumpers.

Although their social media tells us that Namazu have been "damaging eardrums since 2014", the Memphis quartet haven't found the resources to make much in the way of studio-recorded product apart from 2017's debut album *Works Cited*. This five-track EP addresses that gap in the market with some agreeably gnarly post-hardcore noise.

There's something enticingly unpolished about the likes of *Okinawa Wives* and *In Like Flynn*, as guitar and drums almost fall over themselves, like Townshend and Moon running for the bus, and a snarling vocal redolent of Paul Di'Anno informs us, over a sludge-caked riff, that '*Teenage girls will make you pay*' (as the real Errol Flynn of the latter title doubtless learned to his cost).

'*Tastes like steel, is it real, in the night?*' asks *White Wolf*, and god knows what the answer to that is, but it's good, grungy gonzo rock fun finding out.

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Johnny Sharp

Honeymoon Suite

Wake Me Up When The Sun Goes Down FRONTIERS

Canadian hard rockers continue bold reinvention.

Although less recognised in the UK than in their native Canada, Honeymoon Suite have a history of more than four decades. Last year they registered a fresh burst of creativity with *Alive*, their first new album in 16 years. Crafted with their Nashville-based fellow countryman Mike Krompass, a producer and songwriter who has enjoyed success with Steven Tyler and pop artist Meghan Trainor, it electrified a band that was stagnating.

After Krompass moved back to Canada, the band and their new mentor have taken a mere 16 months to reveal the group's ninth studio album, although some tracks are reimaginations of older, unreleased material. Once again the sound benefits from a bold, invigorating contemporary twist.

Wake Me Up doesn't stop the listener dead in their tracks in quite the way *Alive* did, but that's probably due to reduced shock factor. All the same, it's a marvellous album.

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Dave Ling

Cam Muncey & The Delusions Of Grandeur

Cam Muncey & The Delusions Of Grandeur IMPRESSED RECORDINGS

Long-time Jet guitarist makes a melodic guitar-pop detour.

It was all too easy to dump on Jet in the 2000s. The Australian band's ubiquity wasn't entirely their fault, but even now the part they played in making that diluted brand of jangly indie rock popular will still send a shiver down the spine of an AC/DC diehard.

Cameron Muncey, Jet's lead guitarist, has indulged some disparate influences with his self-titled solo debut. Dreamy and prismatic, rooted in shimmering shoegaze and hazy guitar-pop, *No Rock N Roll Star* and *Daylight, Dark Mind* stand out among its 10 tracks. While too many of its songs drift away from their more intriguing moments, there's enough here to warrant a second go-around.

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Chris Lord

Iain Hornal

Return To The Magic Kingdom LOJINX

Seasoned sideman impresses with first physical solo release.

The pandemic did terrible things, but for Iain Hornal, a long-time touring member of 10cc and Jeff Lynne's ELO, it gave him the chance to form Big Horizon with fellow session men, whose debut album came out last month. He was also able to follow up his 2017 solo debut with two more albums, the latter now out in physical as well as digital formats.

He's called it an "uplifting singalong album", but there's a likeably flinty way that Hornal has with lyrics on *Already Dead* (swiping at the self-absorbed) and *Just My Personality* (both barrels for the unaccountable) that gives his brand of breezy pop-rock a hint of Squeeze's sardonic majesty, and the broad Radio 2 appeal of *The Feeling*. Recent single *Positive People* (a dig at mental health hucksters) is particularly infectious, thanks to a subtle key change.

Magic? Not quite. More like the work of a keenly observant student of popular song.

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Johnny Sharp

Wytch Hazel

V: Lamentations *BAD OMEN*

All hail the anti-Ghost!

Wytch Hazel get away with a lot of shit that other bands would get (ahem) crucified for – the all-white karate outfits, the Jesus lyrics, and songs with titles like *Healing Power*, which happens to be the demon-exorcising closing ballad on this album. Their last album, *IV: Sacrament*, even shot to the top of the goddamn Christian music chart. Slayer wept. But that's the effortless power and (ahem) grace of Hazel's frontman Colin Hendra. His Lizzy-esque guitar melodies and a soothing vocal style straight out of a British acid-folk record from 1971.

It's an irresistible combo that has garnered the band a legion of (ahem) disciples over the years, and *V* is sure to bring more converts to the flock. As time goes on they've layered all the chugs and gallops of the NWOBHM with more and more prog and classic rock elements, and this one is their most layered and ambitious yet, from the Maiden-y opener *I Lament* to the intricate hills and valleys of *Heavy Load*.

Is this indoctrination? I dunno. But I will say I gave all my money to the poor and started wearing sandals, so you tell me.

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Sleazegrinder

GWAR

The Return Of Gor Gor *PIT*

Stopgap EP from shock-rock's messiest monsters.

A study in dogged determination, GWAR have been singing songs about deeply silly acts of intergalactic carnage, while dowsing fans with gallons of cosmic spunk, for more than four decades. The untimely passing of founding frontman Dave 'Oderus Urungus' Brockie in 2014 did little to slow their chaotic momentum, and *The Return Of Gor Gor* confirms that the Virginia vulgarians are on excellent form.

Comprised of three new songs and some uproarious live material, this EP is a swivel-eyed delight. The new songs, produced by Converge's Kurt Ballou, are some of the heaviest and best-sounding that GWAR have ever released. In particular, *Lot Lizard* is an ultra-goofy, thrash metal fist to the face. The live tracks, replete with laudably stupid stage banter, are great fun too; but even a deeply unhinged version of *Fishfuck* – yes, it's about shagging a fish – would be much better experienced in the flesh. Either way, the madness continues.

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Dom Lawson

The Speaker Wars

The Speaker Wars

FRONTIERS MUSIC

Stan Lynch gets his old job back.

While spending 18 years as the drummer in Tom Petty's Heartbreakers, by turns being driven nuts by producer Jimmy Iovine and adored by Bob Dylan, Stan Lynch learned a lot. When he left the band in 1994, his education led him to writing songs and producing for others, including the Eagles and Don Henley. Thirty years on, Lynch met Jon Christopher Davis, who had songs and a voice strong enough to persuade him back onto the drum stool in this gifted six-piece.

Although broadly alt.country rock with infectious choruses, *The Speaker Wars*' 10 tracks glide impressively from *When The Moon Cries Wolf* (a Stonesy rocker with a rasping sax break) to acoustic ballad *Leave Him*. Female backing vocals make *The Forgiveness Tree* soar. *You Make Every Lie Come True*, especially, and *Trader's South* conjure memories of Petty. Ending with shades of George Harrison on *I Wish You Peace*, *The Speaker Wars* oozes quality from start to finish.

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Neil Jeffries

Wet Leg

Moisturizer *DOMINO*

Breakthrough alt.rockers expand the palette on loved-up second.

Solid proof that gatekeeping works, the self-titled debut album from Isle of Wight's Wet Leg – the chosen hype act of Rock Hack Twitter 2022 – was a charming and acerbically melodic collection of spite-rock and lust-pop akin to a barbed but romantic Blur.

Follow-up *Moisturizer* finds singer Rhian Teasdale far more loved-up and ready to experiment. The grungey Britpop vibe – encasing a crisp folk-rock core – persists on highlight tracks such as *Liquidize* and *Mangetout*, but elsewhere Wet Leg branch out into warping shoegaze pop (*Jennifer's Bod, Don't Speak*), space lounge (the somewhat aimless *11:21*), retro-electro (the Metronomy-esque *Pokemon*) and krautrock groovers (*Pond Song*, featuring Teasdale singing like a mechanised sexbot).

Things get rough and rocky in places, as Teasdale croons, trills and deadpans images of love as a medical emergency on the electro-gothic *CPR*, gets rather handy on the pulse-racing *Catch These Fists* and attacks *Pillow Talk* – hardcore on numerous levels, about humping one's bed linen in lieu of an absent lover – like QOTSA with a Rampant Rabbit. But the soft centres of *Davina McCall* and *U And Me at Home* keep *Moisturizer* a light and vivifying lotion.

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Mark Beaumont

De'Wayne

June *FEARLESS*

Eclectic Texan rocker thinks big on album number three.

Going right back to the days when industry bigwigs, sharks and money men realised there was serious cash to be made out of rock'n'roll, there's been a rush to discover musicians who have that celebrated (and lucrative) star quality. If we believe the myths, those people arrive with it fully formed and ready for adoration. But the truth is it takes work to ignite that spark.

De'Wayne, from Houston, Texas, has it in abundance, but it's taken toil and nurturing an encyclopaedic knowledge of popular music – his eclectic output so far has taken in classic and alternative rock, soul, jazz, hip-hop and Americana on his journey to work out a formula for the perfect blend of the rock'n'roll he grew up with and the rock'n'roll of the future. The world at large might yet be to bite in terms of traditional media (although the streamers of the world have already switched on), but his self-assurance screams that he knows he has that special 'it'.

June, his third album, finds him mining the sounds of the 80s and 90s for inspiration. A deeply loved-up record, it stands to reason that the imprints of Prince are stamped into the yelps, raw sexiness and rooster strut of much of it. Opener *Lady Lady* is a horndog rocker in the 90s Lenny Kravitz mould, De'Wayne's gleaming riffs speaking as loudly as his words, and *Forever* could easily be Prince hooking up with *Fame*-era Bowie. *Sundays* has 'massive hit' written all over it, a huge, windswept stadium pop-rock singalong of the type that TV talent shows tend to pilfer for the Christmas No.1 slot. *What Does He Really Know* changes tack once again, a bouncing slice of indie rock that sweetly characterises a kid running away to discover himself.

De'Wayne has pulled off a clever trick of weaving in those signifiers of the 80s – Talking Heads percussion, brassy synths, squealing sax – without ever sounding retro. There's a cool economy at play too, each track short, snappy and to the point, not outstaying its welcome. Bursting with heart and character, *June* is the sound of a musician with grand ambitions but enough soul to stay likeable. And clearly, that star quality is ready to shine.

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Emma Johnston

SHAIPAUL/PRESS

JIMMY FONTAINE/PRESS

Halestorm

Everest ATLANTIC

US hard rockers bring on-stage ferocity into the recording studio.

Halestorm's albums sound like a beast stuck in a cage. Since finding success in the early 2010s the Pennsylvania band have earned a reputation for high-octane, anything-can-happen live shows, fuelled by the chemistry between singer/guitarist Lzzy Hale, her drummer brother Arejay and a line-up that's gone unchanged for 21 years. Their records have struggled to convey the same fire, however, with 2015's *Into The Wild Life* especially feeling more sterile than a surgical suite.

After previous album *Back From The Dead* showed some traces of the band's on-stage verve, sprinting through 37 minutes of metal, *Everest* sees them finally scale the summit. And all it took was everything being changed. For the first time, Halestorm were produced by country connoisseur Dave Cobb (Brandi Carlile, Chris Stapleton etc), and they took nothing into the studio except their instruments.

That improvisational spirit quickly rears its head. '*Ha ha! Kick it!*' Lzzy cackles during opener *Fallen Star*, before she and fellow guitarist Joe Hottinger dive into one of the loudest, grooviest riffs they've ever uncorked. It flaunts the same volume as their guitar tones on tour, and the album is packed with that kind of arena-sized intensity, from *I Gave You Everything*'s squealing leads to the piercing shouts of feminist anthem *Watch Out!*. Obsession with the live environment is even more obvious on lead single *Darkness Always Wins*. '*We're fighters, holding up our lighters!*' Lzzy declares, calling for audience participation with all the stealth of an 'applause' sign. Similarly, the refrain in *K-I-L-L-I-N-G* does everything but beg for some spell-along chanting to kick off.

Between those appeals, Lzzy's lyrics bare her fears, traumas and personality with rare honesty. *Like A Woman Can* is a confident celebration of her bisexuality, while *Broken Doll* revisits old, toxic relationships ('*I still believed the lies we shared, shattered dreams beyond repair*') and the title track opens up about the toll of climbing rock'n'roll's ladder ('*All my life I've had to fight and I don't know why, I just keep going*').

How Will You Remember Me? closes the album, with Lzzy wondering what her legacy will be after her death. Casting solemn piano against distorted guitar, it's a gambit of Queen-threatening pomp, all of it reaffirming *Everest*'s gig-ready grandeur and personal vulnerability.

Halestorm have never sounded more comfortably 'themselves' than on album six, so after two decades it seems that their cage has broken at last.

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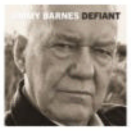
Matt Mills

Jimmy Barnes

Defiant MUSHROOM MUSIC

Knock Jimmy down and he'll get right back up again.



As anyone familiar with his outstanding memoirs will know, Jimmy Barnes has led a challenging life. More recently, the 69-year-old has grappled with potentially fatal health issues. His response was to don the metaphorical boxing gloves and make a record titled *Defiant*.

Fans of the Scottish-born Australian can probably guess what it sounds like. Produced by longtime collaborator Kevin 'Caveman' Shirley, these 10 tracks run the gamut of Barnes' chosen styles – blues, soul, R&B, Americana and good ol' pub rock (Oz-style) – but this time there's even more consistency than usual.

Still belted out in ruinously gravelly tones, *That's What You Do For Love* will resonate with those who still worship at the altar of Barnes' 1987 album *Freight Train Heart*, thanks to contributions from Joe Bonamassa, Journey's Jonathan Cain, Jason Bonham and Barnes' daughter Mahalia – and that's just the opening track.

Defiant is a lesson in how to conquer life's setbacks.

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Dave Ling

CDSM

Convertible Hearse

EXAG/MOTHLAND

Taboo-busting Atlanta synth-rockers' full-length debut.

One only has to look at the latest publicity shots of this Georgia six-piece to understand that they don't share some of the more conservative tendencies of some heavy rock contemporaries. Posed in oversized suits and with undersized instruments, they look like a fetish club house band, and lyrics on this debut album reflect a similar disregard for convention. To a pulsing techno-rock beat, *Cuck Jail* asks: '*Hey buddy, are you busy tonight? Can I watch while you fuck my wife?*' and its nihilistic vision unfolds from there.

But while CDSM (an acronym: Celebrity Death Slot Machine) share a similarly dark world view to, say, early Nine Inch Nails, there's a black humour at work as they satirise biz vampires on *What Do You Make?*. They also deal in infectious sounds, such as the fizzing synth hook of *Not Another Bleeder* and the rave-noir of *This Is My New Hell*.

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Johnny Sharp

Paul Weller

Find El Dorado PARLOPHONE

More covers from the Modfather.

Going deeper than previous covers collection *Studio 150*, here the unquestionably tasteful Weller puts his stamp on tracks ranging from an unexpected run, complete with pedal steel, at Merle Haggard's *White Line Fever* to a gorgeous, string-driven take on The Bee Gees' *I Started A Joke*, and various points in between. The horns-driven sway of Bobby Charles's *Small Town Talk* could have slotted seamlessly on to 2020's marvellous *On Sunset*, and his gorgeous take on late Derry man Eamon Friel's *El Dorado*, featuring Noel Gallagher's guitar, would have sat nicely on 2018's *True Meanings*.

Things kick up a gear for a groovy *Lawdy Rolla*, but perhaps best of all is when Weller is joined by fellow gentleman seeker Robert Plant on vocals and harmonica for *Clive's Song*, originally recorded by Scottish folker Hamish Imlach. It's yet another choice that proves that an evening sitting round Weller's record player would be an interesting one indeed.

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Pat Carty

Chris Stamey

Anything Is Possible LABEL 51

Not made for these times?

Singer-songwriter Chris Stamey can trace his lineage to the dB's and Alex Chilton in the 70s, but his latest album delves back even further, seeking inspiration from the sounds of the 50s that he heard in his parents' house.

If that sounds perilously close to easy listening, the first two tracks will put you right. *I'd Be Lost Without You* builds with strident piano, a delicious bass groove, neat drum patterns and sublime horn arrangements, and Stamey's vocals are strong and clear until he's submerged by luscious harmonies from The Lemon Twigs. The title track is the definition of energetic cool as Stamey and the Twigs continue their sparring over a different set of arrangements. But the pivotal track is the only non-original: *Don't Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder)* from the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*. Stamey has located some abandoned string and vocal harmony arrangements that transform Brian Wilson's minimalist original.

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Hugh Fielder

Swans

Birthing MUTE/YOUNG GOD

More epic workouts on album number 17.

Across the decades since their formation, split and resurrection, Swans lynchpin Michael Gira has never been shy about making his audience work every bit as hard as he works the musicians who play with him.

As ever, then, Swans have made an album that makes demands on the senses as much as on your time (two hours, seven tracks), but this time the sonic onslaught for which they're famed is tilted towards a more textured, while no less muscular, approach. The 19-minute *I Am A Tower* shifts from a prolonged soundscape into a linear narrative that evokes Bowie's Berlin period, the even longer title track achieves escape velocity via a propelled delivery before turning on a sixpence to become a weird lullaby of sorts that nods to Popol Vuh.

Although lacking the shock of the new, *Birthing* is a far more thematic and aurally daring meditation than most. Time permitting.

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Julian Marszalek

Kill The Robot

Kill The Robot DARK LAB

An album that picks up the pace to reach the finish line.

Kill The Robot's self-titled debut is very much a release of two halves. Led by guitarist and synth player Stephen Gibb – who once played shows with Slayer, Anthrax and his Bee Gee dad Barry within a 24-hour period – and augmented by singer Gil Bitton, bassist Gordon Myers and Jean-Pierre Espiritusanto on drums, this 10-song collection appears to be evolving in real time as the influence of 80s synth-pop gives way to crunchier neo-prog stylings.

Early on, *See The World* reaches for the heights of Dream Academy's *Life In A Northern Town* but alights somewhere in the Midlands, while *Summer Days* evokes spike-haired endorser of jumpers Howard Jones. But all is not lost. Kill The Robot find their voice with the driving *No13ise*, which ramps up Gibb's fretwork to display a heavier and more satisfying side of the band. Likewise the creeping menace of *Drug*, which also points to where they could be headed next.

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Julian Marszalek

Enter Shikari

Live At Wembley

SO/AMBUSH REALITY

Official bootleg recording captures the band's biggest night in the capital.

Playing either of Wembley's biggest venues is still a badge of honour for many musicians, and Enter Shikari won't be the last to record a live album at one of them. *Live At Wembley* captures the St Albans band's final stop on last year's UK arena tour.

The genre-blending quartet have merged electro, dance and dubstep with angsty rock for more than 20 years, and it seems this concert was an unqualified success. But like most bootlegs (although usually the illicit variety), the mix here belies the rapturous reception audible throughout – there's a lack of bottom end. "Shall we test out this sound system?" frontman Rou Reynolds asks on *Anaesthetist*. The ensuing dubstep breakdown falls flat. *Sssnakepit* should erupt with Rob Rolfe's percussive power, but he could be hitting the skins in another postcode. Still, if the goal was to document their biggest-ever tour, and all the band's frenetic sonic energy, there are no complaints in that department.

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Chris Lord

Half Japanese

Adventure FIRE

Still mixing it up on album 22.

"I like to listen to Jad Fair and Half Japanese with headphones on while walking around the shopping malls. I just think that if people could hear this music right now, they'd melt. They wouldn't know what to do, they'd start bouncing off the walls and hyperventilating" – Kurt Cobain in *Melody Maker* in 1992.

A new Half Japanese album, full of wonder and delight.

On their twenty-second studio album, frontman Jad Fair is once more brim-full of positivity and open-eyed pleasure at the prospect of life; a world where Louis Armstrong can meet Syd Barrett (*Lemonade Sunset*) and the Steely Dan-reminiscent *Step On Up* can nuzzle up cosily to the melancholy (yet only in wonderment) saxophone on the reflective *Magnificent*.

Think Jonathan Richman, Jack Benny and his cup of coffee, beloved US children's entertainer Mr Rogers… Jad is another in this pantheon of outsider gurus, made strange only by all the negativity surrounding them. In places it recalls Pere Ubu's more intimate moments, in others it squeals and sizzles in delight. A pure pleasure.

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Everett True

Atom Juice

Atom Juice HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

Warsaw crew stake their claim as the Polish Pink Floyd.

Wake up and smell the patchouli, people, because Atom Juice, a psych/prog band from Poland, are fully dedicated to the retro world, and it's riding in on a wave of deep grooves and immersive, swirling guitars creating a vortex to lose yourself in for an hour of spaced exploration. The influence of Pink Floyd at their dreamiest looms large over this debut album, with its dense layers of sound creating that elusively comfortable numbness, and heavier garage-rock peaks on the likes of *Duo* adding a pleasing crunch to proceedings. It's perfect for blocking out the noise of the modern world and floating back to a simpler, more analogue place in the universe.

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Emma Johnston

ROUND-UP: **BLUES**

By Henry Yates

The Boneshakers: strident vocal energy and spicy guitar playing.

NICK MORELAND/PRESS

The Boneshakers

Live To Be This GULF COAST

For a timely reminder that Randy Jacobs – best-known as the right hand for Was (Not Was) – ranks among the low-down-funkiest guitar players out of Motor City, consider this second album from the revived Boneshakers line-up. With the band on the ropes at the turn of the decade following the death of vocalist Hillard Atkinson, new hire Jenny Langer's holler-and-stomp presence proved restorative on 2022's *One Foot In The Groove*.

Now the Californian brings even more strident wildcat energy on *Live To Be This*, Jacobs plainly enjoying scratching up sparks against her. On an album poised between Detroit soul, golden-era Muscle Shoals and Dobro porch blues, *How Do You Spell Love* lifts you out of your shoes, *Here I Am*'s shout-it-back chorus is positively Pavlovian, and *Ain't Good Enough For Me* is spiced with a funk solo whose brittle hits are worth a thousand creamy pentatonics.

The highlight is Bobby Rush swinging by for *Salty* – the 91-year-old's voice dry as a cracker – before tender closer *The Cake And The Candle* gives our bones a rest.

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Koko Taylor

Crown Jewels ALLIGATOR

Can Koko Taylor really be 16 years gone? The Memphis lioness still sounds deathless on Alligator's hits compilation, tearing up standards like *Wang Dang Doodle* and filling the floor with her own hot-buttered *Voodoo Woman*. If you listen to just one track, make it the Buddy Guy-bolstered *Born Under A Bad Sign*, taking Albert King right to the wire.

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Jimmie Vaughan

Do You Get The Blues?

THE LAST MUSIC COMPANY

Do You Get The Blues? marked a bitter-sweet juncture in Vaughan's career. The bluesman was in love, inspired and productive – and more people would surely know songs like the chest-puffed-out *Dirty Girl* and *Robbin' Me Blind* were it not for the album's original release on September 11, 2001. Reissued, and stripped of that dark backdrop, it remains joyous.

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Jon Slidewell & The Reedcutters

Poor Boy Blues SELF-RELEASED

Happiness is a pub, a pint and a band like The Reedcutters blasting old-school R&B in your face. From the freight-train harp to Slidewell's enjoyably edgy, insistent vocal, this Manchester outfit just get it. And while *So In Love* and *Someone New* work familiar shapes, the kinetic energy is undeniable.

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Kemp Harris

The America Chronicles

SELF-RELEASED

If you want to know just how tough life in the US can get, ask a 72-year-old gay black man. While Kemp Harris would be within his rights to rage against his motherland, the activist and singer-songwriter wraps his iron fist in a velvet glove, *Edenton* recounting his childhood in segregated North Carolina over blissful soft-soul.

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THOMAS COOPER/GETTY

Styx

Circling From Above *ALPHA DOG 2T/UME*

Band's eighteenth studio album, packed with pomp and prog.

No matter which way you look at it, we're a long way from *Pieces Of Eight* and songs like *Blue Collar Man (Long Nights)* or *Renegade*. We don't just mean chronologically, either. This latest incarnation of Styx, now with enough members to rival Iron Maiden or Supertramp in their prime, appear to have forgone the occasional foray into distorted guitars and stacked amps, as prog and pomp notes abound, and the whole record feels like a gentler, more reflective Styx. Less AOR, too, although when they turn their hand to it they can still absolutely nail a single that would eat up FM radio, as with the keening pop and very prog-pop (mandolin solo, anyone?) *It's Clear* and the sweeping ballad *Forgive* – if that doesn't fill an arena with the light from a few thousand swaying mobile phones, then Styx fans have simply stopped listening.

That said, as is sometimes the case with a band that has more members than a five-a-side football team and allows everyone to have a go, stylistically and sonically it can sometimes veer across the road like a drunk driver trying to get home. *Everybody Raise Your Glass* is very much like that moment on a Queen album where they let Roger Taylor have a go, which is utterly charming, but is so absolutely Queen-like in construction, guitar tone and arrangement that it's almost veering into parody. And not even a Freddie Mercury parody. Ditto too the folksy, gypsy-like tones of *Blue Eyed Raven*, full of Spanish guitar, mandolin and fiddle. It's an odd turn in the road, and for those hoping for the mandolin-flavoured majesty of a song like *Boat On The River*, please look away now.

Although there are plenty of moments on the record to offset the occasional musical snafu, lead single *Build And Destroy* is prime Styx pomp: an unshakeable melody, thundering chorus and what sounds like a hundred voices storming together towards the hook. *Michigan*, too, roils along with a glorious vocal arrangement before a neat breakdown and understated guitar solo making for a brisk, glistening three minutes of hard rock. At the other end of the scale comes *Only You Can Decide*, a sparse, piano-led piece with a beautifully wrung vocal arrangement that may or may not be about a school shooting.

Totally unexpected in the best kind of Styx way.

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Philip Wilding

Orianthi

Some Kind of Feeling

WOODWARD AVENUES

A fret-singeing representation of the heartbreak recovery process.

Between tours with the likes of Alice Cooper, Dave Stewart and Richie Sambora, renowned singer/guitarist Orianthi has released a handful of albums since 2007. Now, following up 2022's *Rock Candy*, she delivers blues-laden emotional roller-coaster *Some Kind Of Feeling*.

Save for an unexpected cover of ZZ Top's *Sharp Dressed Man*, nine original songs pinball from yearning to loss. High-octane affirmations *Attention* and *Dark Days Are Gone* celebrate escaping a shitty relationship, *What I've Been Looking For* smacks heavily of Gary Moore, threaded with haunting, melodic interludes. Things come over all gospel with heartbreak pop anthem *Ghost*, followed by the sulky *First Time Blues* with Joe Bonamassa guesting. Finally, *Heaven Right Here* signifies an arrival through the dark. Throughout, Orianthi's guitar chops complement her storytelling and she avoids the trap of overplaying.

A reflective albeit angsty record but, ultimately, bookended by hope.

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Phoebe Flys

Margarita Witch Cult

Strung Out In Hell

HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS

Fire up the bong in celebration as doomy stoners triumph with second LP.

The unbridled joy at the sound of a guitar with hot pickups being fed through a dirty fuzz box and shot out through a cranked-up and toasty-warm valve amp will only go so far without a solid foundation to scuff up. And Brummie trio Margarita Witch Cult sure know how to get the groundwork done, with an adherence as much to insistent melodies as to the grinding riffs that drive them.

Nor do they fuck about, as they instead celebrate the imposition of time barriers to drop nine songs in a little under 40 minutes. Witness the pulverising *Scream Bloody Murder* or *Witches Candle*, on which the galloping rhythm of the latter and measured pace of the former are likely to induce a reaction akin to a Kuwaiti oil field. The brilliantly named George Casual and Jim Thing (drums and bass respectively) are tighter than Rachel Reeves at Christmas as Scott Abbott's double-tracked vocals and relentlessly riffing drive hard throughout. Although their cover of Billy Idol's *White Wedding* misfires, atonement is a made via the glorious sludge of *Conquer Worm*.

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Julian Marszalek

The John Street Revival

II *THE JOHN STREET REVIVAL*

Americana, country rock'n'roll viewed through a British prism.

Big skies, endless highways, the gleam of passing cars as they drift by, the sound of a pedal steel keening into the endless blue… Many bands are chasing that American dream and trying to pin down the soundtrack that accompanies it. It's a big ask, and even more so when you've come motoring out of the heartlands of Cheshire.

The John Street Revival, led by Christopher Insley (part David Cross, part Billy Gibbons), make a pretty good fist of it, though. This is wonderfully mournful stuff, a rueful tone, a stolen glance, one too many drinks. Some Jayhawks, a nod to Little Feat, but resolutely theirs, and especially good on *Roses* and the expansive *I've Seen You Around*.

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Philip Wilding

Hot Milk

Corporation P.O.P

MUSIC FOR NATIONS

Genre-mashing Mancunians up the ante on album two.

They may have sprouted up amid the latest generation of the pop-punk family, but Manchester's Hot Milk have been mixing things up since day one.

Rising up with *Kashmir*-style drama on opener *(How Do I) Make The Devil Fall Asleep*, they pinball from emo melodies to intense nu-metal rage, industrial bluster to drum 'n' bass interludes, metalcore screams to warm pop croons from co-vocalists Han Mee and Jim Shaw. On reaching *Warehouse*

Salvation, lift the heavy rock of its surface and underneath you'll discover a seam of house beats, a likeable nod to their home city's eclectic musical heritage.

It's exhilarating, full of earnest vigour, but it's not all style over substance. They've got plenty to say too, taking aim at, among other things, thuggish nationalism and organised religion, using the twin weapons of righteous fury and withering sarcasm. From here they can take any direction they choose in the future and still keep us guessing.

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Emma Johnston

Spider Kitten

The Truth Is Caustic To Love *AFP*

Some of it's pretty and some of it isn't.

More than two decades into a career in which Spider Kitten have release a dozen albums of variously demented music, lucky number 13 finds the Welsh sludgers teasing their music into increasingly distended shapes. *Sueño* and *Three Shots* are honours graduates from Ennio Morricone college, complete with freight-train acoustic guitar rhythms and ricocheting bullets, while *Woe Betide Me* is delightfully dismal and *Guilty* the kind of bottle-empty blues that Layne Staley might have sung to delay last orders at the Titty Twister.

Elsewhere, Alice In Chains' dark and gritty template is hauled through the murk to become darker and grittier, filthier and stinkier. Riffs lurch and sway as if struggling to hoist themselves from quicksand, and *The Dose*, *The Spoiler*, *Fetishising Unhealthy Objects*, *Gold Into Shit*, *Wretched Evergreen* and *Crying Towel*, despite all being well under two minutes long, are heroically epic fusions of feedback and feral noise.

Marvellous times.

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Fraser Lewry

Drab

Drab *WORMHOLE DEATH*

Sludgy southerners' debut gets belated physical release.

Cognoscenti of the New Orleans rock scene may have caught the debut album by this Louisiana trio on their Bandcamp site in 2022, but Italian label Wormhole Death are now giving it a wider physical release.

And it merits another listen when they find a distinctive sound for themselves, such as when the broody, western twang surrounding *Break That Chain* frames the grungier textures of their natural habitat to resemble Soundgarden at their dustiest. Its psychedelic guitar meanderings towards the end suggest another road they could take more often in future, because elsewhere things sound a touch too generic to divert us for long. Steve Mignano's voice is strong but sounds like so many other bluesy rock growlers we've heard over the years, and although *It's Been Too Long* and *Bite Down* are built around arresting riffs, they don't stick long in the memory.

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Johnny Sharp

The K's

Pretty On The Internet *LAB*

Heart-on-sleeve indie arena rock dazzles on second album.

They might tout Jimi Hendrix, Chuck Berry, The Clash and The Jam as influences in interview (someone's been going through their dad's record collection), but this rattling, sometime down-at-heel collection of tracks is much closer to bands like The Flatliners or the ever thrilling The Menzingers (if The Menzingers came from a small town in the northwest of England) – raw, full of the feels, and bulging with melodies. It's excellent stuff though, and follows on from the bristling promise of their debut album *I Wonder If The World Knows?*.

Songwriter Jamie Boyle still hasn't found the filter between himself and the outside world, and his material is all the better for it, not least in the punchy and fairly self-explanatory *Breakdown In My Bedroom* or the more intricate *The Bends (Here We Go Again)*.

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Philip Wilding

The Feelies

Rewind *BAR/NONE*

Indie-pop pioneers pay tribute to their heroes – with underwhelming results.

Even if they'd never released anything after their classic 1980 debut album *Crazy Rhythms*, The Feelies would still be regarded as one of the most important American post-punk bands.

Weird, wired nerds playing music you can dance to, their influence is obvious. However, this compilation of covers from throughout their long career is for completists only. Songs by the likes of Neil Young, Patti Smith and Jonathan Richman are rendered far too faithfully – fun, no doubt, within the context of a live set, but pointless otherwise. The only standout track is their take on The Beatles' *Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except Me And My Monkey*, as it has that irresistible and utterly distinctive fence-rattling guitars and hepped-up tempo Feelies feel. It was recorded in 1980, for their first album.

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Paul Whitelaw

The Cold Stares

The Southern Part II

SELF-RELEASED

More blues for you.

So here we have it: *Part II* of The Cold Stares' very fine *The Southern*. It was originally conceived by guitarist Chris Tapp as a double album because they had so many songs, but Mascot Records chose some tunes for *Part I*, leaving the balance for this follow-up.

And what a follow-up it is, just that much harder rocking than *Part I* and featuring some of the band's best songs to date. The opening brace of *Little More Rope* and *Automobile* feel like ZZ Top circa *Degüello*, with plenty of funky groove to the drums, and that vintage vibe is revisited on the full-tilt rock out *Changed Her Mind Again*. Tapp gets to smoulder moodily on *Hurting Side Of Love* and *Can't Call That Love*, the songs dripping with melancholy and misery, while *Hard To See* could have been beamed in from the 60s.

Part II is fire, as they say. Can't fault it.

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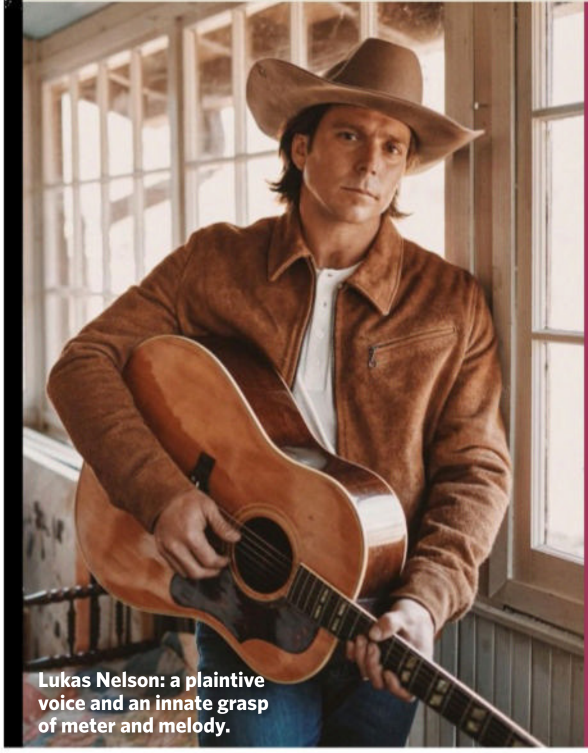
Essi Berelian

ROUND-UP: COUNTRY ROCK

By Rob Hughes



Lukas Nelson: a plaintive voice and an innate grasp of meter and melody.

Lukas Nelson

American Romance

SONY MUSIC NASHVILLE

Lukas Nelson's solo career has been a long time coming. Skippering Promise Of The Real (Neil Young's backing band for a good while) took up most of his past 15 years or so, although there's been extracurricular stuff too, most notably Nelson's Grammy-winning soundtrack work for *A Star Is Born*, writing and producing alongside Bradley Cooper.

POTR's indefinite hiatus has now cleared the way for *American Romance*, pushing Nelson's plaintive voice and innate grasp of meter and melody to the fore. It also pairs him with another scion of country royalty, producer Shooter Jennings. The moods are varied, from the weathered acoustic country of *Ain't Done* to *Born Runnin' Outta Time*'s silvery rock'n'roll and the old-time string band chug that motors *Outsmarted*. And while Stephen Wilson Jr. and Sierra Ferrell prove to be capable duet partners, Nelson excels alone with guitar, as on the spare *You Were It*, the first tune he ever wrote, which was covered by his father Willie two decades ago.

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The Wood Brothers

Puff Of Smoke

HONEY JAR/THIRTY TIGERS

This Nashville-based roots trio – upright bassist Chris Wood and guitarist sibling Oliver, plus multi-instrumentalist Jano Rix – play fast and loose with notions of Americana, bringing brassy funk to *Witness*, approximating a calliope waltz with *Above All Others* and unpacking rock'n'roll for the cautionary *Slow Rise (To The Middle)*.

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Tami Neilson

Neon Cowgirl *OUTSIDE MUSIC*

Tami Neilson grew up playing country with her Canadian family band (The Neilsons), but her prolific subsequent solo output allows her greater reach. *Neon Cowgirl* veers between vintage Memphis soul, Patsy Cline-ish torch ballads, roadhouse blues and dusky country. But the real star is Neilson's remarkably expressive, infinitely flexible voice.

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Sally Anne Morgan

Second Circle The Horizon

THRILL JOCKEY

A sometime member of Black Twig Pickers, Morgan brings the same love of old-school Appalachian music to her solo work. Fiddle and banjo dominate these quietly spectacular instrumentals, underpinned by ambient folky drones. *I Saw A Heron* carries a dancing melody, and is offset by the mournful wonder of *Flowers Of Shandihar*.

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Hayes Carll

We're Only Human

HWY 87/THIRTY TIGERS

This compelling tenth from the weary-voiced Texan finds him in deeply reflective mode, alternately training his lens on society (the dry, playful *Progress Of Man (Bitcoin & Cattle)*) or himself (the aching *I Got Away With It*), framed mostly by acoustic guitar and pedal steel. *May I Never* is a fabulous gospel finale featuring guests.

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Bush

I Beat Loneliness EARMUSIC

BUSH
I BEAT LONELINESS

UK grunge lifers delve into mental health matters for album number 10.

Between new releases from Skunk Anansie, Garbage, Pulp and Suede, the (already tedious) live return of Oasis, and baggy jeans and plaid shirts making a pleasingly comfy comeback, the 90s are back with aplomb in 2025, much to the delight and slight age-related horror of those of us whose misspent youth traversed that decade. So Bush should slot straight back in with *I Beat Loneliness*, their tenth album, and sixth since they re-formed in 2010. And yet, largely because they were always more successful in the US than their UK homeland, they remain on the outside of it all, their sound still tailored to the American radio stations that made them millionaires.

Wisely, they've chosen to keep on doing what they know the best – indeed, what they've been doing since their debut *Sixteen Stone* hit in 1994 – and the first half of the record churns out one blustery grunge rocker after another. But keeping a musical theme together makes a lot of sense when the lyrical journey starts to reveal itself, frontman Gavin Rossdale delving into an exploration of self-harm, mental health struggles, recovery, survival and the urge to reach out a helping hand to anyone else who might be struggling. The latter lightens the load on the songs, Rossdale's deep, sometimes doomy vocals taking on a slightly brighter note when the search for hope comes to the forefront. Side A is very much business as usual, then, aimed firmly at the fans who've stuck with Bush over the past three decades and know exactly what they want from the band.

It's when we hit side two that things get a little bit more inventive, turning a corner on *We Are Of This Earth*, which brings things down a notch with a dreamy, spacey, mournful little bit of echoing shoegaze. It's a moment of beauty that gives pause for thought and paves the way for the raw honesty of *Everyone Is Broken*, a stripped-back, gentle call for kindness and solidarity, with sweet gang vocals in the chorus driving home the idea of all of us being in this messy old life together.

It's not the most ambitious record in the world – at this stage in their career Bush don't seem to be trying to capture a new audience or to chase the zeitgeist – but *I Beat Loneliness* does give the impression of a band reaching out to the listeners they know are already there and offering the comfort of emotional understanding and musical familiarity.

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Emma Johnston

Joe Bonamassa

Breakthrough J&R ADVENTURES

It's in the tweak.

With more than 50 albums to his credit this century and a relentless touring schedule, you have to wonder how long Joe Bonamassa can keep it up. But on this, his seventeenth solo studio album, here's no let-up in standards, from the opening anthemic title track to the biting *I'll Take The Blame*, the funked up *Drive By The Exit Sign*, the emotionally drenched blues of *Broken Record*, the contrasting acoustic gentility of *Shake This Ground*, or the piledriving *You Don't Own Me*.

The secret, it seems, is in the tweaking. Bonamassa knows what he's good at and doesn't stray from the parameters. But he's also a master of making small adjustments that keep the momentum rolling. This time round it's on the songs, using co-writers including Tom Hambridge and James House to beef up his own inexhaustible supply. That in turn creates a different setting for his signature solos to fly.

And then there's producer Kevin Shirley, who has been with him since for ever. Bonamassa knows Shirley will create a coherent album out of tracks recorded at five different studios.

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Hugh Fielder

Diamond Head

Live And Electric SILVER LINING

Metallica-endorsed Brit metal.

DIAMOND HEAD
LIVE AND ELECTRIC

Fascinating bunch, Diamond Head. How many other bands can say they made their greatest album while having one of their mums as a manager? Despite their 1980 debut *Lightning To The Nations* being idolised by stars as enormous as Metallica and Megadeth, the Midlanders' many splits and comebacks never permitted much hope for commercial success, and they're currently on ice again due to founding guitarist Brian Tatler playing with Saxon.

Live And Electric plugs the gap between 2019's *The Coffin Train* and the band's next, inevitable, return, comprised of recordings of songs from across the past 45 years on a 2022 tour. The *Lightning* songs obviously remain strong, but with the band sounding as tight as a vice and vocalist Rasmus Bom Andersen in rip-roaring form, less celebrated songs like *Bones* and *Death By Design* find vigour anew. Whether you know the band's whole catalogue or just one album, this is a spruce-up worth hearing.

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Matt Mills

Onslaught

Origins Of Aggression

REIGNING PHOENIX MUSIC

The classics revitalised.

Absolutely guaranteed to put you in a neck brace, this first Reigning Phoenix release from UK thrash pioneers Onslaught is a double album featuring re-recordings of top tunes from their first three albums from the 80s, plus a whole bunch of cover versions spotlighting the band's early influences.

Given the benefit of modern studio technology, the revamped songs sound incredible – *Angels Of Death, Power From Hell, Let There Be Death, Shellshock*, all speed by in a breathlessly vicious blur of hyper-speed riffing. The covers are essentially Onslaught's *Garage Inc*, bristling mostly with ultraviolent versions of punk and hardcore songs by Dead Kennedys, Discharge, The Exploited and GBH, plus a bunch of classic metal from Priest, Sabbath and Motörhead, the latter a mightily ripping take on *Iron Fist*. There might not be any new songs on here, but this metal thrashing madness is not to be missed.

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Essi Berelian

Mark Stewart

The Fateful Symmetry MUTE

Final, posthumous release from ex-Pop Group frontman.

MARK STEWART

With his final set of material, Mark Stewart showed that the raging, dramatic, inquisitive energy that had informed him since 1978 was undimmed. With Youth on board, however, he exhibits a change in musical tone – smoother, more cinematic than of yore, as on *Memory Of You*, which is Yello-like in its lushness (Yello's *The Rhythm Divine* is referenced on *Crypto Religion*).

There's a range of styles, however, including the dubwise take on *Everybody's Got To Learn Sometime*. Here, Stewart

JOSEPHLLANES/PRESS

vocalises from all angles in the mix – the rafters, open windows, on high. His declamatory, hyper-wrought tones dominate *This Is The Rain*, as if delivered from a bullhorn. Finally, *A Long Road*, featuring the simplest, saddest acoustic piano as Stewart's vocals slither out plaintively, and with retrospective poignancy ('*Look back and hold me…*'). We will, Mark, for ever.

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David Stubbs

Brent Cobb & The Fixin's

Ain't Rocked In A While

OL' BUDDY/THIRTY TIGERS

Cobb cranks it up.

While Brent Cobb is often viewed as a straight-ahead acoustic singer-songwriter, his new album finds him amping things up and getting wild and rowdy – the huge clue is in the title, of course. There are some mellower moments, for sure – *Til Dawn* is a delicate and fragile-sounding tale, while *In Our Hands* tugs expertly at the heartstrings – but mostly it's about rocking out, loose, ragged and soulful. Alongside his live band The Fixin's, on record for the first time, the songs were recorded live to tape in the studio, resulting in a glorious and raucous set of tunes, the standouts including the fuzzy, riffy title track, the sultry blues groove of *Bad Feelin'* and witty *Even If It's Broke*. For clever songwriting check out *Take Yer Meds*, while *Do It All The Time* feels like Aerosmith and Led Zep rolled into one. All these songs are destined to become live staples for sure.

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Essi Berelian

Diesel Park West

Leicester? DANVILLE

Twelfth studio album from Brit-rock cult heroes.

'*Sometimes you just want verse and chorus,*' John Butler intones in the Kinks-esque *As We Were*, and this steadfast belief in pop classicism has sustained Diesel Park West over a 35-year career that began with timeless 1989 debut *Shakespeare Alabama*.

Leicester?, the follow-up to 2024's *Presley Trap*, sees them gleefully plundering the musical gold mine, effortlessly shifting gears between Stones-y bar-room boogie (*Living On The Line*), Byrds-esque jangle (*Someday Don't Mind Who*) and breezy piano pop (*That Touch Of Magic*).

At the album's heart is a carpe diem belief in making every day count. '*I'm a man in a hurry!*' Butler declares in psych-pop nugget *Nothing But Today*. *Experience* is a rousing meditation on the passing of time. *Hole In One* is a strings-laden celebration of the wounds inflicted by Cupid's arrow.

Heartfelt and heroic, Butler remains one of the nation's most underrated songsmiths. Today, Leicester…

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Paul Moody

Luke Morley

Walking On Water LEFT HOOK

Third solo album from Thunder guitarist.

Thunder singer Danny Bowes's stroke has left the band in limbo, but a writer as prolific as Luke Morley was never going to spend his 60s in pipe 'n' slippers repose. Instead he's built a solo career on the same principles he's utilised since his pre-Thunder band Terraplane: impeccably crafted hard-rock anthems with a bluesy undertow beneath whopping choruses.

More comfortable in his solo skin these days, here Morley sizzles through the rip-roaring *Snakeskin Parachute*, but he's more contemplative on the *Blaze Of Glory*-style (Jon Bon Jovi rather than The Alarm) scarf-waving ballad *Forever And Again*. While vocally he sounded a tad tentative on 2001's *El Gringo Retro* and 2023's *Tales From The Blue Room*, here he's finally blossoming in that area. The bulk of *Walking On Water* would have fitted snugly on a Thunder album, and if Bowes had sung *Natural High* and *In Your Light*, they would have been different, but not necessarily better.

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John Aizlewood

California Irish

The Mountains Are My Friends 7HZ PRODUCTIONS

The Answer frontman looks westward with country-loving friends.

There comes a time in many a rock fan's life when they feel an irresistible urge to acquire a bootlace tie, put away noisy, childish things like hard rock, and make more mature, laid-back, sedate music, usually broadly categorised as 'Americana'.

The Answer's Cormac Neeson scratched just such a country-rock itch by forming California Irish with his Belfast musician friends, drawing on western styles and a touch of sun-dappled Laurel Canyon songwritery fare. *The Mountains Are My Friends* is neatly turned, smoothly textured stuff, but in creating such soft-spun sounds this debut can veer towards the sleepy and forgettable. On a couple of occasions, though, they retain your attention, like when the lilting duet *I Am Free* features a nice spangly guitar figure as pedal steel and banjo sparkle in the background, and when the CSNY-meets-Dubliners *Something Different* seduces with yearning vocal harmonies, mandolin and tin whistle.

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Johnny Sharp

Royale Lynn

Black Magic EPITAPH

Nashville artist's pop-meets-metal debut is a dreadfully cynical listen.

Royale Lynn has said that every song on this album is about mental health – which is worthy subject matter. But if that's the case, then surely it shouldn't sound so bombastic and emotionally vacant. The Nashville singer's former country-rock leanings had some charm, but this pop-metal debut is chaff. Disturbed's brand of ultra-polished metal might is an obvious influence, although they have David Draiman's idiosyncrasies and several songs of note. Occasionally a decent riff appears (*Greed, When We Die*), but only as an affectation, and Lynn's over-processed vocals never sound at home.

This is an irksome chart grab born of cynicism, and you'll struggle to find a rock album with less personality all year.

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Chris Lord

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

No Sugar: rock'n'roll with effortless charisma.

SVETLANA GRIGORIEVA/PRESS

No Sugar

Last Call SABOTAGE

If your biggest problem with anarcho-punk is that it's just not sexy enough (guilty), then I have the band for you. Straight outta Hamburg and primed to rage against any machine, No Sugar are a fistful of rock'n'roll that shakes and rattles with effortless charisma. Sorta like a female-fronted Hives with a taste for political haymaking, this is action rock at its finest. Jammers like *Reverse Offender, Brides Of The Night* and *We Need New Enemies* strut around like they own the place. You get what's up, right? This is a band that can lay down ultrasonic slabs of heavy rock at night and overthrow the capitalist death cult by day. Clearly the heroes we need right now. These guys just ain't fuckin' around. Like, at all. Killer riffs, killer hooks, handclaps and cowbells everywhere. They deserve boundless riches for making this record. They'd probably just burn it all given their political persuasions, but still. I mean, they've got a fucking banjo on one of the songs, and they still rock mercilessly.

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Helena Rats

Plague City SELF-RELEASED

Killer rock'n'roll from Portland that sounds like it coulda come from Sweden. There's a definite Hellacopters-y verve to the whole thing, but it's also got a gritty, neon-spattered LA vibe as well. These guys sound like they utterly destroy on the stage. I like 'em so much I spray-painted their logo all over my old high school – and I'm 56 years old, for Chrissakes.

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Poison Heart

Love, Lies, Hard Times

HEAVY MEDICATION

It's been seven long years since Warsaw's Poison Heart released a record. Empires have risen and fallen while these dudes hung out smoking cigarettes and occasionally writing riffs. Thank Christ I lasted long enough to see this scorching long-player see the light of day. Big guitars, big hooks, big production, big everything. Arena action rock at its finest.

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Snarewaves

I'd Rather Die Than Be On Linkedin SELF-RELEASED

If a headache was a rock'n'roll band, it'd be Snarewaves. Lo-fi synth-punk that's so punk I don't even think they have a synth. The song titles tell the whole tawdry tale, really: *Liquor Sto', Stick 'Em Up, Too Cool To Work*. You get it. Not one song is over 40 seconds long, which is perfect because you're ready to tear your hair out by then. An instant classic.

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Frizbee

Sour Kisses PAINTER'S TAPES

Midwestern garage punk with a guitar that sounds like a knife to the guts and a singer who sounds like an angry drunk at a party arguing with the wall. I remember being at a show once at an art gallery and at some point the band picked up a sofa and hurled it through the gallery window. That's the kinda energy Frizbee give off. I love it.

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES

GIJSBERT HANEKROOT/REDFERNS

Jethro Tull

Still Living In The Past PARLOPHONE/WARNERS

JETHRO TULL
STILL LIVING IN THE PAST

Daze of future past.

Wedged between *Thick As A Brick* and *A Passion Play*, *Living In The Past* was a hodge-podge compilation of early singles, B-sides and tracks from Jethro Tull's first three albums, released in late '72 and designed to lure the band's new legions of fans who had just sent *Thick As A Brick* spinning to the top of the US chart. It was titled *Living In The Past* after Tull's 1969 breakthrough UK single, which never appeared on an album and didn't chart in the US. The collection certainly did its job in the States, peaking at No.3 and establishing Jethro Tull as one of the biggest British bands in America, just behind Led Zeppelin.

Fifty-three years later, this hugely expanded latest edition is a five-CD-plus-Blu-ray set but it's still a hodge-podge, although whether that's by design or accident is difficult to tell. On the plus side it now includes the rest of Tull's 1970 concert at New York's Carnegie Hall that was restricted to two tracks on one side of the original double album. But strangely those tracks have not been integrated into the concert sequence.

The main problem with this collection is that many of the tracks have already been revived and restored on the multi-CD sets that have been compiled for Tull's early albums, thus rendering them largely redundant here. So restorer-in-chief Steven Wilson has had to root around the vaults to see what else he can come up with.

He starts by putting a 2025 glow on eight of the original album tracks that were given a remix back in 1971 in preparation for the compilation. He's also found an Andy Johns mix of *Inside* from *Benefit*, another early version of *My God* and a demo of *Wond'ring Aloud*, all previously unreleased, among other bits and bobs. He then set about reassembling the original *Living In The Past* tracklisting on CDs 2 and 3, except that he slips in an additional early B-side, *One For John Gee*, that probably should have been on the first CD.

CDs 3 and 4 contain the rest of the 1970 Carnegie Hall concert – lively versions of *Nothing Is Easy*, *With You There To Help Me*, *A Song For Jeffrey* and *To Cry You A Song*, an extended version of *We Used To Know* and a pre-*Aqualung* version of *My God*. But the 20-minute version of *Dharma For One* appears to include the edited version that's on CD3.

■■■■■□□□□□

Hugh Fielder

Cardiacs

On Land And In The Sea

ALPHABET BUSINESS CONCERN

Career peak from influential avant-prog psych-punk surrealists.

Five years after the passing of Cardiacs frontman Tim Smith, this deluxe vinyl repressing of their second official album, from 1989, is a welcome reminder of his musical genius. A favourite among hard-core Cardiacs connoisseurs, *On Land And In The Sea* captures these cult South London avant-punk surrealists at their most uncompromising with its constantly tempo-twisting rhythms, frenzied marching-band melodies and exploded song structures. Smith certainly dials his experimental extremism up to 11, from the ferocious sonic assault of *The Duck And Roger The Horse* to the cinematic finale *The Everso Closely Guarded Line*, an epic eight-minute seaside carnival of acid-fuelled Brechtian cabaret jazz.

But behind their abrasively arty mania, Cardiacs remain in fruitful dialogue with Britpop history at all times, drawing on a rich lineage of psych, glam, prog and punk elements. *The Stench Of Honey*, for example, sounds like *Sgt. Pepper* directed by David Lynch, while the baroque'n'roll maximalism of *I Hold My Love In My Arms* compresses Queen's entire career into 70 glorious seconds.

Their full-blast theatricality can be overwhelming at times, but there are so many ideas jammed in here that famous fans like Blur, Radiohead, Napalm Death, Steven Wilson and Faith No More can all now cite Cardiacs as an inspiration while still sounding completely unlike each other.

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Stephen Dalton

The Kinks

The Journey Part 3 BMG

The decline? Not a bit of it.

the Kinks
THE JOURNEY

This third part of The Kinks' retrospective trilogy series is possibly the most divisive. It covers the era of their greatest US triumph and goes from their reinvention as a proper rock band to their final chart success with the *Come Dancing* album.

For some fans, The Kinks' return from obscurity as a slick, anthemic guitar band who filled stadiums in the US was a sad change of direction compared with their earlier work. In reality, this new direction – and, finally, some hit records again – saw a revitalised Ray Davies and brother Dave discover a new energy and a new source of material. They were making loud, catchy records again, but with a contemporary edge (no more ukulele oompah nostalgia), and songs like *Low Budget* and Dave's brilliant *Living On A Thin Line* suited a late 1970s riven with urban violence, inflation and a general sense of disappointment at the world (the latter a staple of Ray's best work). There's verve to skinny-tie rockers like *Around The Dial* and *Catch Me Now I'm Falling* that was lacking from much of the band's 70s work. Classics, too, abound, such as the melancholy beauty of *Misfits*, sad anthem *A Rock'n'Roll Fantasy* and, of course, the beautiful *Come Dancing*.

An underrated Kinks era finally receives the treatment it deserves. With its addition of a 1993 live show recorded at London's Albert Hall, *The Journey Part 3* is an essential purchase.

■■■■■■■■■□

David Quantick

Cats In Space

Chapter 1 ESOTERIC

Is it too early for a Cats In Space box set? Never!

Less than a decade has passed since Cats In Space released their debut album, *Too Many Gods*, and in the intervening years they've released another eight, plus two live collections and a best-of. The only thing they haven't done is release a box set. Now, *Chapter 1* puts that right, bringing together the four albums recorded with original frontman Paul Manzi, who left to join Sweet in 2019.

Fans will know what to expect – albums they already own, with harmonies that glisten, guitars that ring and soar and shine, oodles of 70s influences and tireless devotion to the oft-neglected art of melody – but it's the bonus tracks where the added value lies. The best are a cover of Slade's *How Does It Feel* that sounds like the riotous climax of a West End musical, as Cats mainman Greg Hart swaps lines with Thunder singer (and band manager) Danny Bowes, and a cover of Led

Zeppelin's *Communication Breakdown* that perfectly captures the spirit of the original, had the original been recorded by Montrose. There's also a hilarious 12-inch mix of *Thunder In The Night* that shoehorns every disco cliché imaginable into a high-waisted, bell-bottomed celebration of night fever.

Bring on *Chapter 2*.

■■■■■■■■□□

Fraser Lewry

The Sisters Of Mercy

First And Last And Always

RHINO

40th-anniversary edition of landmark goth classic.

THE SISTERS OF MERCY
FIRST AND LAST AND ALWAYS

Sisters founder and vocalist Andrew Eldritch has persistently dismissed the 'goth' tag for his band, whose sound is rooted in the bleak nihilism of Suicide and the Velvet Underground at their most opiated, combined with Stooges rawness and Doors psychedelic flamboyance. Instead he sees them as an evolution of pioneering late-60s/early-70s classic rock.

On *First And Last And Always*, the Cold War-era paranoia of opener *Black Planet* conjures a desolate post-apocalyptic dystopia – a theme to which Eldritch would later return on the opener of 1987's *Floodland*, *Dominion/Mother Russia*: *'Run around in the radiation/Tune in, turn on, burn out in the acid rain.'* The 60s hippie flower-power utopia now a demilitarised zone littered with destruction.

The artillery of Oberheim DMX drum machine Doktor Avalanche announces *Walk Away*, one of guitarist Wayne Hussey's compositional highlights – along with his sombre *Marian* featuring Eldritch's sinister Teutonic tones. Founding guitarist Gary Marx's Byron-via-Cormac-McCarthy *Nine While Nine* remains the most affecting goth love song ever recorded. With Craig Adams' shuddering bass line, *Amphetamine Logic*'s stabbing refrain *'Nothing but the knife to live for'* epitomises the psychological trauma of a speed comedown, and the wretched romance of *Some Kind Of Stranger* is a howl of unrequited love.

First And Last And Always is a classic that deserves better treatment. This 40th-anniversary reissue is almost the same as that released a decade ago for its 30th anniversary, the sole difference being the gimmicky 'marble' effect black/red vinyl. The four vinyl LPs set purports to include "three EPs", but apart from 1984's *Body And Soul* EP, earlier classic Sisters EPs *Alice* and *The Reptile House* are absent in favour of the album's two lead-off singles – *Walk Away* and *No Time To Cry* – and their B-sides.

■■■■■■■■□□

Alex Burrows

Rain Parade

Crashing Dream Deluxe

LABEL 51

Last drop of rain.

Rain Parade

With *Emergency Third Rail Power Trip*, their 1983 debut, Rain Parade delivered an instant underground classic and seemed set for a breakthrough.

Unfortunately a couple of things went awry. First, songwriter David Roback departed for psychedelic pastures new, taking his reverb-guitar magic with him. Despite the talents of Matt Piucci and Steven Roback, and the brilliant *Explosions In The Glass Palace* EP, Rain Parade suffered the same fate of many 80s bands who signed to major labels (Island in their case) and discovered that expensive production means replacing psych scuzz with pop synths. Cue disturbing waves of Depeche Mode.

Much of *Crashing Dream*, while competent, ambles in low gear, lacking the antecedent's splashes of colour. Disc 2 compensates with 16 bonus/alternatives, including remasters of songs recorded live in Japan for 1985's *Beyond The Sunset* and *Depending On You* live at the BBC.

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Claudia Elliott

Blood Sweat & Tears

What Goes Up! Best Of

FLOATING WORLD

Brass in pocket.

BLOOD SWEAT TEARS

What rotten luck that, having come up with a new sound – adding lots of highly polished, highly accomplished brass and jazz colourings to rock – and released their debut album in 1968, Blood Sweat & Tears soon found themselves playing second trombone to another band with similar musical ideas when Chicago Transit Authority (soon truncated to just Chicago) released their debut a year later. While Chicago leaned more towards rock, BS&T had more finger-snapping swing, with big-band-style arrangements, brassy harmonic swells and overall jazzier stylings.

As far as 'best of's go, *What Goes Up!* does a good job, pulling together probably familiar tracks such as *Spinning Wheel* and *You've Made Me So Very Happy* and lesser-known but better ones, including covers of Traffic's *Smiling Phases* and *40,000 Headmen*, many showcasing the great, hard-as-nails vocals of David Clayton-Thomas. Some of the jazzier, arrangements might be a tad hard on the ears for newcomers to the jazz-rock-pop genre, and the occasional experimental burst doesn't quite come off, such as the busy, Zappa-like pop-rock-jazz-psychedelic *House In The Country*, but overall this collection is an excellent and engaging entry point to a band that deserved to be better known and an exciting style of music worth exploring.

■■■■■■■□□□

Paul Henderson

Talking Heads

More Songs About Buildings And Food (Deluxe)

RHINO

Expanded second from collegiate genii.

LUCIANO VITI/GETTY

In the wake of their debut album 77, Talking Heads found themselves critically successful and, thanks to its single *Psycho Killer*, noted for David Byrne's cold-eyed observation songs. On their second album they ditched the brass section and any remaining cutesiness, and set about inventing much of the 80s. They'd already made an impact on critics with a sound that seemed to take the existential blankness of European art-rock and filter it through a uniquely American lens, like a preppy Albert Camus, a style that, with its brainy lyrics and jerkily funky rhythms, would have a massive influence on any new group out of Britain or the US who didn't want to sound like the Sex Pistols.

Talking Heads could have made a career out of that first album. Instead they pushed things further. They brought in Brian Eno, famous for concepts, to produce. Eno brought along his many ideas and noises, and the result was a beefier, if somewhat muddy-sounding, collection of songs that weren't so much about buildings and food as about art, artists and, in the case of the brilliant *The Big Country*, how rubbish normal Americans were (the fabulous line '*I wouldn't live there if you paid me to*' is the nearest David Byrne ever got to a punk sneer). The results were largely fantastic, as Byrne and Jerry Harrison's guitars galloped and scritched like every indie record and post-punk song would afterwards, while Tina Weymouth and Chris Frantz set about inventing a rhythm section that would have hits in its own right. Add to that the band's first hit, a cover of Al Green's *Take Me To The River* that went Top 30 in the US, and you have an album that, while transitional, remains something of a classic.

Some early Talking Heads fans would say something was lost when the band lost their preppy soul edge and went down the Byrne and Eno art-school alleyway with their next pair of albums. Others might say *More Songs About Buildings And Food* suffers from being a halfway house between the band's early sound and what it would become under Eno and Byrne's constrictive guiding hand. But even as a transitional record *More Songs About Buildings And Food* is extraordinary.

This new edition includes recordings of two contemporary live shows, alternative versions and a big ol' book too.

■■■■■■■■□□

David Quantick

DEZO HOFFMAN/SHUTTERSTOCK

Jeff Beck

Reissues PARLOPHONE

Late iconoclastic guitar maestro's first two albums remastered on coloured wax.

When Jeff Beck released *Truth* (**9/10**) in 1968 he was still smarting over *Hi Ho Silver Lining* representing his first solo venture after getting sacked from The Yardbirds, despite that single scoring a top 20 hit. While producer Mickie Most's pop plans floundered after two more singles, their blues-based B-sides heralded the direction Beck blazed with his band that included little-known singer Rod Stewart and bassist Ronnie Wood. After the Jeff Beck Group became an instant hit touring America before *Truth*'s release, it made No.15 in the US album charts.

Riff-heavy blues rock was still finding its feet when the album appeared brandishing templates Led Zeppelin ran with, including Beck's heavyweight churn through Willie Dixon's *You Shook Me*. Starting by kissing goodbye to his past with its slowed-down take on the Yardbirds' *Shapes of Things*, Beck hot-wires Buddy Guy's *Let Me Love You* to unleash his Group's uproarious blues grind, dialogue between Stewart's raw-throated vocals and Beck's stinging guitar an exciting trademark. In fact, Rod's tour de force full-album singing debut almost steals the show ricocheting over Wood's lyrical rumble and drummer Micky Waller.

While the blues informs *Rock My Plimsoul*'s cheeky heist of BB King's *Rock Me Baby* and slow-burning *Blues Deluxe* his *Gambler's Blues*, along with Howlin' Wolf's *I Ain't Superstitious*, the band shine on sublimely dramatic treatments of Jerome Kern's *Ol' Man River*, *Greensleeves* and Bonnie Dobson's apocalyptic *Morning Dew*. Already familiar as *Hi Ho Silver Lining*'s B-side, *Beck's Bolero* had been recorded in May '66 with Jimmy Page, Keith Moon, John Paul Jones and pianist Nicky Hopkins, who now joined Beck's group.

With his band irrevocably fractured by relentless touring, and Waller replaced by Tony Newman in Beck's quest for heavier grooves, 1969's *Beck-Ola* (**6/10**) was a short, patchy set lacking *Truth*'s cohesion, but it goosed the UK Top 40. After kicking off with *All Shook Up*, one of two rambunctious Elvis covers along with *Jailhouse Rock*, the set is completed by four densely overdubbed originals: *Spanish Boots*, *The Hangman's Knee*, future Faces set staple *Plynth (Water Down The Drain)* and slamming proto-metal instrumental *Rice Pudding*, interrupted only by Hopkins's twinkling instrumental *Girl From Mill Valley*.

While Stewart embarked on his solo career and Faces with Woody, Beck realised his super-heavy dream with Tim Bogert and Carmine Appice.

Both these albums were crucial stepping stones to those heady peaks.

Kris Needs

Don Felder

The Vault FRONTIERS

Checking the rear-view mirror in the fast lane.

Don Felder was a member of the Eagles from 1974 to 2001, and the title of his autobiography, *Heaven And Hell: My Life In The Eagles*, tells you all you need to know. He could have retired on the co-writing credits for *Hotel California* and *Victim Of Love*, but instead he has maintained a solo career.

His latest album came about when he came across a bunch of tapes dating back to 1974 that he'd consigned to storage in 2000. That stash has provided half a dozen songs for *The Vault*, including rocky opener *Move On*, the first song he submitted to the Eagles, and the reflective, darker *Hollywood Victim* that got squeezed out of the Eagles' Hell Freezes Over tour. Although they've been re-recorded with a stellar West Coast guest list, it doesn't take much to envisage how they would have worked. Felder is, after all, the man credited with moving the Eagles from country rock to the mainstream. He's updated *Heavy Metal (Take A Ride)* – his best-known solo song, used in the 1981 animated cult movie *Heavy Metal* – and written four new songs, ending with a poignant acoustic tribute to Glenn Frey, his chief tormentor in the Eagles, regretting that they never reconciled.

■■■■■■□□□□

Hugh Fielder

J Mascis

Live At CBGB's: The First Acoustic Show CHERRY RED

Dinosaur Jr man unplugs.

This is a delightful curiosity: a red vinyl reissue of the recording of Dinosaur Jr frontman J Mascis's first acoustic show, at legendary New York City club CBGB in December 1993. It's just Mascis, his tremulous voice and a fast-paced acoustic guitar.

He sounds nervy, on edge as he laments and tears his way through old favourites such as *What Else Is New*, *Keeblin'* and eternal outsider hymn *Repulsion*, but this helps fuel the music's power and emotional drive. You can tell he's nervous, because the notoriously laconic singer actually introduces some of the songs.

The set is short – 38 minutes, 12 songs – but packed with a disarming heft, nearly voyeuristic in the way the basic rudiments of the songs are left exposed, laid bare. Noticeably, the songs stand on their own merits without the coruscating solos more usually associated with Mascis. It feels intimate because it is intimate, the audience mere inches away from the fragile magic happening on stage. Lynyrd Skynyrd (*Every Mother's Son*) and The Wipers' Greg Sage (*On The Run*) are paid due respect, the latter song cutting particularly deep as Mascis wails and draws out the original's sense of yearning and displacement.

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Everett True

Grinderman

Reissues BMG

Nick Cave's groovily grubby side hustle struts again.

Everyone needs to let off steam sometimes, and in the late 00s Nick Cave and some Bad Seeds rocked out like a much rawer Tin Machine. Cathartic, often comedic, and a safety valve for the singer's – or at least one of his persona's – lolloping libido, Grinderman served their purpose. They allowed a reset for the 'main' band, which resulted in the comparable thrust of *Dig, Lazarus Dig*, then the airier, more artful *Push The Sky Away*.

So how did the Aussie aesthete get away with the wild willy-tugging of *No Pussy Blues*? By making his lust funny and ridiculous, as in lines such as *'I read her Eliot, I read her Yeats, I tried my best to stay up late, I fixed the hinges on her gate'*. Snoop Dogg declared himself a fan, which never happened circa *Murder Ballads*.

Grinderman sweated out two albums – *Grinderman* (**9/10**, 2007) and *Grinderman 2* (**8/10**, 2010) – plus *Grinderman 2 RMX* (**7/10**, 2012), a remix of the latter, featuring Robert Fripp, Josh Homme, Matt Berninger and others. The debut was the doozy, channelling The Birthday Party's primal power to liberate a breed of gospel garage rock. Cave testified through knowingly randy raunch like *Go Tell The Women* and the lazily titled *Get It On*. Always, the brain in the lyrics tempered the body's blusterings. The follow-up was more studied, yet still whirred up some white heat, as on the romantic epic stand-out *Palaces Of Montezuma*.

Grinderman's passionate, massively fun emissions are now reissued on vinyl and CD, and remain dirty, sweet and gritty pearls.

Chris Roberts

Warrant

Ultraphobic *DEKO ENTERTAINMENT*

LA's down boys go grunge on mid-90s release.

To the glam pioneers thinking that songs about cars and girls would last for ever, the ill wind that blew down from Seattle along the Sunset Strip at the tail end of the 80s must have felt like a blustery weather front fanning the flames of another destructive California wildfire.

The fall came hard and fast, not least for bands like Warrant, who rose to platinum sales status singing songs about cunnilingus and cherry pie. Those were, as we're wont to say, different times. To be fair, Warrant wrestled gamely with grunge on 1995's *Ultraphobic* and almost pinned it to the mat a few times. Very Alice In Chains in part, but they're still at their best when working their way around one of Jani Lane's ballads, like the lovely *Stronger Now* and the sweeping *High*.

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Philip Wilding

Sweet

Platinum Rare 2 *METALVILLE*

Heavy-duty glam-rock legends clear out the vaults.

Undoubtedly one of the greatest glitter-dappled yob mobs of their generation, Sweet always rocked harder and heavier than most of their hod-carrying bubbleglam rivals. They embraced the camp aesthetics of the era while yearning to be taken seriously as metallic contenders who could write their own material.

This spotty collection of rough mixes, out-takes and demos taken from guitarist Andy Scott's private collection, featuring all four original members of the band, does a halfway decent job of highlighting their autonomous musical credentials. Granted, there's quite a lot of generic hard rock riffage here - apart from the almost proto-punk *Identity Crisis*, the instrumental tracks are pure filler - but it also includes unearthed gems such as *Strange Girl*, a crunchy power-pop homage to The Who circa '67, and the great lost 70s Sweet single *Turn It Down*, the rough mix of which sounds just like the New York Dolls. As for the demos, they're mostly inessential, although you can practically hear Scott's grin as he bashes out an essentially fully formed *Fox On The Run*. An immortal banger is born.

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Paul Whitelaw

The Bobby Lees

Beauty Pageant

ALIVE/NATURAL SOUND

Back from the grave and better than ever.

THE BOBBY LEES
BEAUTY PAGEANT

Back in 2018, when this album was recorded, the world was wide open to the Bobby Lees. A sexy, bloozy punk band from New York with sharp, concise lyrics, a singer who moonlit as a successful indie-film star, and a live show that left smoke and blood trails on the stage, the band were primed and ready for a whirlwind ascent to the top. Four years and three albums later, they were publicly throwing in the towel, revealing the painful truth about playing in a rock'n'roll band in the Spotify era – it doesn't pay the bills.

That's the bitter, nihilistic now, though, and this is about the live 'n' dangerous then. By any measure, *Beauty Pageant* is one helluva debut album, a fiery, liturgy of primal rock'n'roll action. Hooky grunge-punkers like *Deem 'Em Dead* collide with demonic blooze like *Limosine* that showcase the dead man's howl of singer Sam Quartin. It's like the smartest, hippest kids in the room rearranging The Cramps and the Blues Explosion in real time. And in true punk rock fashion, the whole thing is over in 17 minutes.

This is a crucial reissue, the world's introduction to a blazing comet that burned out way too early.

■■■■■■■■□□

Sleazegrinder

Warfare

Lemmy Sessions *CADIZ MUSIC*

Satisfy your appetite for destruction.

It's difficult to imagine a grimmer, grimier slice of metal history than this seething slab of plastic. Available for the first time on vinyl – highly collectible limited-edition metallic gold vinyl, no less – to celebrate its 40th anniversary, we have Warfare's second album, *Metal Anarchy*, produced by Lemmy and boasting such ear-tormenting tracks as *Death Vigilance, Military Shadow* and *Wrecked Society*. Taken from a 40-year-old cassette that drummer Evo found in his loft, this is the Lemmy rough mix of the album before it was turned into the final article, so you can imagine what it sounds like – crisp and pristine it is not; ugly and gnarly it certainly is.

Basically, this is part of the similarly named three-CD set released by Cherry Red a couple of years ago. But this LP version also comes with bonus 12-inch *The Robot* EP, which features a cover of The Saints' *Do The Robot, Dance For Tomorrow We Die, Cemetery Dirt And Murder On Melrose* with guest appearances from 'Fast' Eddie Clarke, Cronos and Tom Angelripper. Fast and filthy, it's the perfect complement to *Metal Anarchy*'s explosive ferocity. Both discs benefit immensely from being played at paint-stripping volume.

■■■■■■■□□□

Essi Berelian

Dr. Feelgood
Down By The Jetty

Dr. Feelgood

Reissues *RHINO*

British 70s R&B at its raw, thrusting finest.

RICHARD CREAMER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY

Dr. Feelgood were not the sort of geezers you'd want to meet down a back alley after dark (or before, for that matter). Hard-drinkin', hard-workin' blue-collar sorts fuelled by the dementedly choppy guitar and songwriting of cultural icon/hardman Wilko Johnson and fronted by the tatty mohair suits and skinny ties of psychotic Canvey Island dandy Lee Brilleaux, forever blasting down a harmonica. And let's not forget John B Sparks (bass) and The Big Figure (drums).

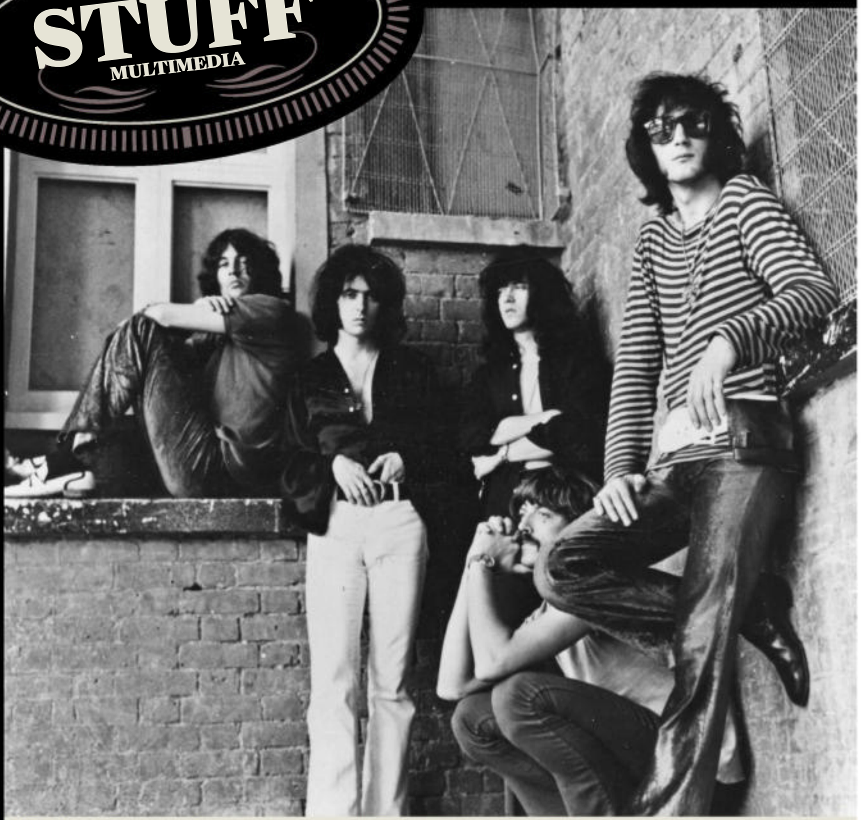
Formed in 1971 in Canvey Island out of the detritus of previous R&B bands, Dr. Feelgood released an astonishing eight albums in five years, beginning with 1975's *Down By The Jetty* (**9/10**) – pure adrenaline thrill, not a note wasted, not a snarled vocal out of place. Johnson's finger-picking percussive guitar style eschewed the need for lead guitarists – he could play rhythm and lead simultaneously. *She Does It Right*, *Roxette*, a fucking *tight* version of John Lee Hooker's *Boom Boom* that makes me salivate even thinking of it, this was the blueprint for much of the punk that followed (e.g. Ramones, Richard Hell, The Jam). Raw as fuck, *Jetty* is shot through with the barely controlled amphetamine-charged energy of a band that have played live relentlessly for half a decade.

Ten months later they followed it up with the surly, snarling *Malpractice* (**8/10**). The churning, charged, Stones-y *Back In The Night* is the one you'll know, but they're all as good – especially the deranged, watertight take on *Riot In Cell Block #9*. Perfection in musical form in places, for sure.

The peak is *Stupidity* (**10/10**). This document of Dr. Feelgood live is ferocious, razor-sharp focused. Side A recorded in Sheffield, side B in Southend, no overdubs, white-boy rhythm and blues in its purest form. It reached No.1 in the UK in October 1976 without a hit single to support it, and remains one of the greatest live albums ever, up there with those by Motörhead, James Brown and The Who.

Sneakin' Suspicion (**8/10**, 1977) was the final Dr. Feelgood album recorded with their talismanic guitarist – Wilko got sacked/left halfway through recording. It bears up remarkably well; no extra thrills, just music as the Feelgoods always played it – raw, uncompromising and tight as fuck. And in the title track, finally a hit single.

Everett True



Deep Purple: The Visual History – Epic Carbon Edition

DEEP PURPLE
THE VISUAL HISTORY
EPIC CARBON EDITION

RUFUS

Ultra-limited-edition celebration of the hard-rock icons in their pomp.

There can be few groups from classic rock's golden era that have a back story as complex or as colourful as that of Deep Purple, and this lavish tome – the Epic Carbon Edition, in a run of just 50 copies, which comes in a metallic case, signed by six band members – tells it with just the right amount of irreverence.

This is largely thanks to esteemed author Chris Charlesworth, a *Melody Maker* writer in the 70s. His revised text (the original version of the book was published in 1983 and is much sought-after by fans) provides context, while his encounters with the band during the period enable him to tell the Deep Purple story with a pithy insight beyond the reach of most cut-and-paste affairs. So we learn that the band once considered Rod Stewart for lead vocalist ("We thought he was pretty awful," sniffs then-bassist Nick Simper), and that guitarist Ritchie Blackmore – already a comparative veteran at 22, having done stints in both The Outlaws and Screaming Lord Sutch's band – was "the reverse of celibate" in the early years, carving girls' names into bedposts "at a rate Casanova would have envied".

As their career progresses, we're drawn further into the band's inner workings. A six-week US tour in 1969, which culminated in both Simper and singer Rod Evans being fired, is recalled as "a fiendish nightmare" by former manager John Coletta, and recollections of the band's subsequent golden period – dubbed 'Purplemania' in the music press – are equally candid. Touring hi-jinks saw bassist Roger Glover twice stripped naked and left by the roadside with nothing but a handkerchief to protect his modesty. A spirit of hedonistic competition between Purple and the Faces on one US trip saw, as tour manager Rob Cooksey recalls, singer Ian Gillan once enter a hotel room "naked from the waist down with a burning newspaper sticking out of his arse".

Unfortunately there's no photographic evidence of such larks, but *The Visual History* nonetheless lives up to its billing, this revised version coming with 16 pages of previously unseen images from the band's performance at the California Jam in April 1974.

They were different times, of course, but such vivid recollections, together with superb archive photos, make *The Visual History* an essential read for those who hanker for the days when the dinosaurs ruled the Earth.

■■■■■■■■□□

Paul Moody

Blondie In Camera 1978

Martyn Goddard ACC ART BOOKS

'A small remembrance of something more solid…'

Some of the most iconic and/or historic photos were a result of 'Right place, right moment, good subject; forget artistry'. As Martyn Goddard says of his sleeve photo for Blondie's single *Picture This*: "Just as I wrapped up the set, she poked her tongue out and licked the record; more by luck than photographic skill, I fired the shutter." Result: cool shot.

There are more cool photos in this book. There are some average ones. There are some, notably live ones, that are little more than filler. Together they cover a narrow window in Blondie's rise, taken on two of his assignment trips to New York in '78, and most, unsurprisingly, are of the outrageously photogenic Debbie Harry.

Goddard is a photographer, not a writer, and his already prosaic narrative could do without detail such as: "I shot the full-face portraits for *The Telegraph* cover with a 500mm F8 mirror lens attached to my Nikon FE camera, lit with a Metz Reporter flash attached to a studio stand."

One for the Blondie collector who has to have everything.

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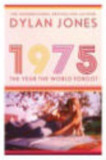
Paul Henderson

1975: The Year The World Forgot

Dylan Jones CONSTABLE

It wasn't all prog.



Dylan Jones, always an astute commentator, quite rightly scoffs at punk's year-zero nonsense by claiming 1975 as a high point for popular music. And it's a pretty convincing argument.

In between asides on political events and everything from Quentin Crisp to *Fawlty Towers*, he picks several records that give weight to his choice of annus mirabilis. Springsteen's *Born To Run* ("thirty years of post-war freedom squeezed into one short LP"), Dylan's *Blood On The Tracks* ("the very best album of 1975") and Led Zeppelin's *Physical Graffiti* ("Single albums were for mortals") are obvious nods, and there's also room for Curtis Mayfield, NEU!, Keith Jarrett and even Return To Forever.

While claims that *Young Americans* is Bowie's greatest record or that Joni Mitchell's *The Hissing Of Summer Lawns* is better than her *Hejira* are questionable, the learned manner with which Jones plumps for his favourites makes for very entertaining reading.

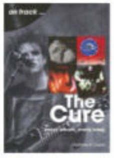
■■■■■■■■□□

Pat Carty

The Cure: Every Album, Every Song

Matthew R Davis SONIC BOND

Exactly what it promises.



Books about The Cure are hardly short on the ground, and 2023's *Curepedia* and Lol Tolhurst's memoir *Cured* said almost all of what needs to be said.

Oddly typeset and not printed on the highest quality paper, *Every Album, Every Song* hardly looks and feels essential, but it delivers what it promises and it takes in last year's *Songs Of A Lost World*. Australian writer Matthew R Davis (whose band once supported Queensrÿche) mistakes Wembley Stadium for Wembley Arena, and the self-references grate, but he's an otherwise reliable guide. Better still, for all that he's obviously a fan, Davis highlights hidden gems ("lovely and wistful," he notes of *Breathe*) and isn't afraid to call out the by-numbers padding that Robert Smith is far from immune to, hence *Fake* being "plodding soft rock that outstays its welcome".

A surprisingly useful addition to the Cure bookshelf.

■■■■■■■□□□

John Aizlewood

Miss O'Dell

Chris O'Dell and Katherine Ketcham

LIVERPOOL WEST PRODUCTIONS

One woman's life at the core of the rock circus.

Chris O'Dell worked her way from lucky Beatles office girl to one of the first female tour managers by the time she was 25. After Apple she was personal assistant for Mick and Keef on the Stones' *Exile* tour, and accompanied Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue. In her spare time she was an occasional muse; George Harrison and Leon Russell wrote songs about her.

In this film she travels back to London to revisit that era with Pattie Boyd and 'Whispering' Bob Harris, among others. Life at the centre of the whirlwind is

PICTORIAL PRESS LTD / ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

exciting and exhausting. One minute she's up on the roof with the Beatles, the next, Phil Spector is pressing a gun to her head in a restaurant. At two hours it's a little on the long and winding side, and it's heavily slanted Beatlewards. More revelations on the rest would have been welcome, but it's a remarkable look at life behind the scenes at rock's Big Top.

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Claudia Elliott

Tearing Down The Orange Curtain

Nate Jackson & Daniel Klein DA CAPO

Death, drugs and violence: that was Orange County punk.

Located just south of Los Angeles and best known for being the home of Disneyland, Orange County is perhaps an unlikely home for one of America's punk revolutions, one from which The Offspring, No Doubt and Social Distortion would lurch into international consciousness. Yet, as experienced OC observers Nate Jackson and Daniel Kohn explain in absorbing depth here, the scene encompassed extreme levels of violence (Jack Grisham of T.S.O.L. dressed in drag solely so he could beat up anyone who commented unfavourably), industrial quantities of drugs, endemic criminality, financial chicanery, confused politics, a jaw-dropping death count… Surely the pair can't go wrong. They don't. The real meat comes with the tales of the nearly-made-its, from Sublime, whose leader Brad Nowell was the scene's most gifted and most tragic founding father, to Beatles-loving punks The Adolescents via the witty Vandals.

■■■■■■■■■□

John Aizlewood

The Progressive Rock Revival, 1984 To 1989

Andrew Wild

KINGMAKER PUBLISHING

What neo-prog did next.

In *A Mirror Of Dreams*, last year's predecessor to this book, Andrew Wild traced the early days of the British neo-prog scene. In this one he follows the many fellow travellers keen to follow Marillion's pioneering success. While they fell short in chart and commercial terms, the majority – from IQ, Pendragon and Pallas to the lesser-known likes of Solstice and Haze – still retain loyal followings four decades years later.

This is a relatively dry account of gigs, releases, deals and disappointments, but it's not without tales of penurious desperation – such as Solstice's producer, bankrupted due to support for the band, getting locked out by the landlord, then breaking in to find "a full-on sophisticated witches' circle in the loft above my family's bedroom". Again, rare photos, memorabilia and press cuttings add welcome colour to an essential read for anyone with an interest in a seemingly short-lived scene whose influence nonetheless still endures.

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Johnny Sharp

A Complete Unknown

Dir: James Mangold

SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Dylan's early days, revisited in sumptuous style.

When James Mangold painted his cinematic portrait of Johnny Cash in 2005's *Walk The Line*, he'd been gifted with a larger-than-life cartoon of a man to portray. For *A Complete Unknown* (out on digital, Blu-ray, DVD and 4K UHD) the source material is a little more complex.

Covering the period from Bob Dylan's arrival in New York City to his 'goes electric' Newport Folk Festival appearance, the film looks stunning, the sets and costumes bringing the early 60 to life vividly. But it's Timothée Chalamet who elevates it from slightly soapy to sublime. His Dylan is belligerent, arrogant, insecure, and kind of a dick, in awe of folk figurehead Pete Seeger (played sweetly by Edward Norton) but quick to turn on him.

He embodies the man completely, but it's the songs that really make it, Chalamet nailing that wail and the magic Dylan conjured on his guitar in those early days, enabling us to experience the familiar through fresh ears, as if it were new.

It's not the most historically accurate film, and the women in it – including Monica Barbaro as a golden-voiced Joan Baez – could do with being characterised as more than mere mirrors reflecting Dylan's shortcomings, but visually and musically it's a feast.

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Emma Johnston

SOME KIND OF FEELING
ORIANTHI

Woodward Avenue Records proudly announces the June 27TH release of Orianthi's new album, *Some Kind of Feeling*. Find this and other incredible music at woodwardavenuerecords.com and keep up with the latest news on Orianthi at orianthi.me

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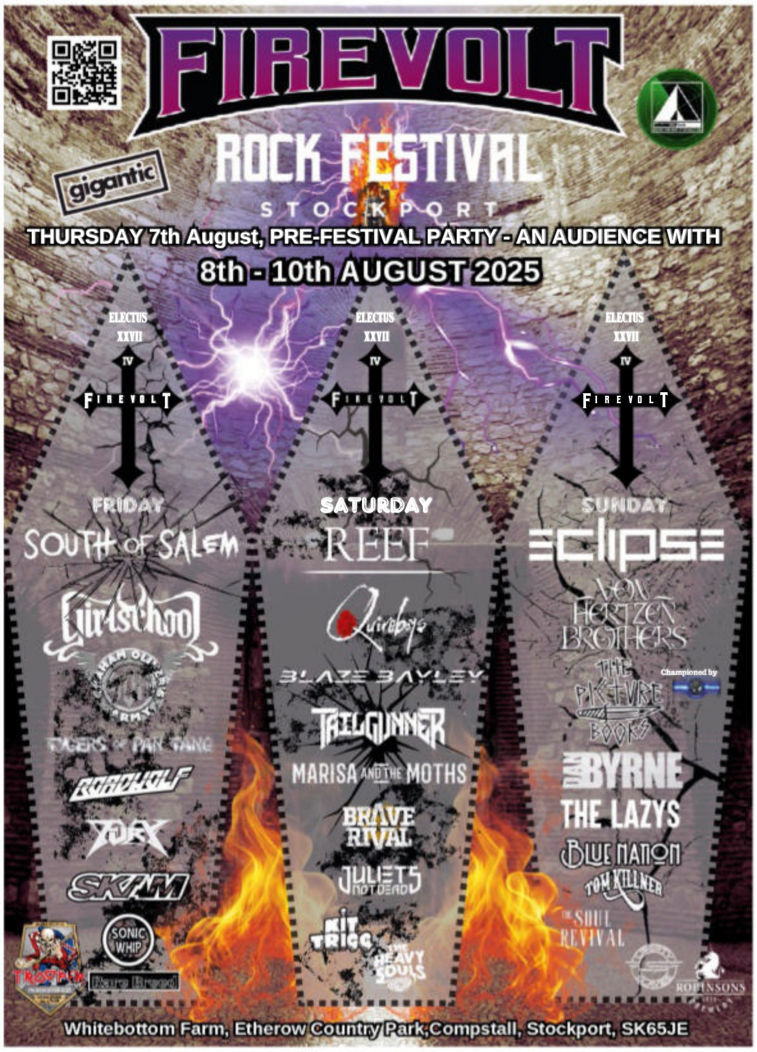
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The High-Voltage What's On Guide

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P90 INTERVIEWS
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98

Iron Maiden

Now *that's* what you call a show.

JOHN McMURTRIE

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NOW BOOKING

Cardinal Black

Back with a new album and with Slash in their corner, they play UK dates in October.

Formed officially in 2021 (but temporarily extinguished during lockdown), Welshmen Cardinal Black call themselves "the oldest new band in the world". With their freshly released second album *Midnight At The Valencia* drawing widespread praise, singer Tom Hollister and guitarist Chris Buck preview the band's 14-date British and Irish tour in the autumn.

Most bands have a lifetime to write their debut album but then just months, or even weeks, to come up with a follow-up. In their second lease of life Cardinal Black found themselves in a rather different situation.

Chris Buck: The way the first record was made over the space of ten years, it felt like it just happened. So there was a little nervousness, but it [the new album] wasn't a difficult record to make, actually.

Tom Hollister: I quite like the challenge of writing to time restrictions because it focuses my brain. Otherwise I can be a bit sloppy.

Your 2022 debut *January Came Close* took the band from playing university bars to sharing a Royal Abert Hall stage with Peter Frampton, so the pressure was on.

Buck: The biggest issue we faced [with the debut] was making it sound like a coherent record, as it was written over such a prolonged period of time. We felt it was nice to have a blank canvas and to write something completely new from scratch.

In around a year, Cardinal Black went from headlining London venues The Lexington (200 people) to Islington Assembly Hall (890) and Shepherd's Bush Empire (2,000). Did it feel like the thing took on a life of its own?

Buck: A little bit, yeah. I try not to over-analyse these things and just live in the moment, but it does feel like things are gathering momentum.

If, as you have claimed, the first album was made for yourselves, did its success in any way inhibit the creative process when it came to making *Midnight At The Valencia*?

Buck: Do you mean to deliver more of the same? No. I want to make music that I would like to listen to. The biggest difference with this album is that it wasn't self-produced. It was nice to have that outside ear to keep us on the right track.

Hollister: Realising that there was an audience for us provided the freedom to do a little more. If anything this record is slightly more Americana and a bit less bluesy, but we certainly didn't feel hemmed in by expectations. Fundamentally it's still guitar-based rock.

MAIN: MARTY MOFFAT/PRESS; INSET: LORNE THOMSON/REDFERNS

Lyrically the new record visits some dark spots.
Hollister: Yeah. For the most part it addresses times that myself, Chris or Adam [Roberts, drums] have gone through. That's life, there are deaths, divorces and children born. It can be good to get all of that out of your system.
Buck: Especially for a man who would cry over an Andrex advert.
Hollister: Yeah. When we're playing live I can get a bit soppy. But there you go, that's how I am.

The record is charged with emotion. Do Cardinal Black consider themselves a rock band, or a soul band with blues-rock tendencies?
Hollister: Blues, soul, rock. It's all of those.
Buck: There are times when I wish we could be more easily compartmentalised.
Hollister: As long as he's playing and I'm singing, it's going to sound like Cardinal Black.

Tom, who are your vocal heroes?
Hollister: Strangely, I'm attracted to people that don't have what you might call classically great voices. I like Mark Knopfler and Eric Clapton. In a more obvious sense I'm a big fan of Otis Redding. A more modern example would be Paulo Nutini, but my favourite artist of all time is probably John Martyn. I do love a tortured genius.

With the debut being self-released, and having spoken of prizing the band's independent status, Cardinal Black are now labelmates of Blackberry Smoke on the US label Thirty Tigers. Why did you pick them?
Buck: I still consider us a DIY band because almost everything still comes from us. As much as they signed us and there's an A&R process, Thirty Tigers are a service label. They market and distribute us, but the decisions that would ordinarily be dictated to a band by a record label are still ours. Everything about them, including their roster, feels very natural.

We often hear horror stories of British bands venturing to the States, but your most recent tour was a triumph. For example in Los Angeles you sold out The Troubadour.
Buck: That's one of the most iconic venues in the world, and, unsurprisingly, we didn't get a response when we emailed them. So Slash stepped in, and he also wrote a letter of recommendation that helped with our US visas [Chris and Slash have been friends for several years – Ed]. The place sold out, which is an indication of how the wind was blowing. We're going back out there again this summer.

Following that return visit to the States, the band then have 14 domestic dates in October and November. Why should people buy a ticket?
Buck: Because we're fucking amazing! [laughs].
Hollister: Seriously, we are fundamentally a live band. We're about to load in our gear to a hundred-capacity record store, but we love that every bit as much as the Royal Albert Hall. It's about seeing the faces of the people. We've got a growing fan base whose loyalty has taken us from The Lexington to Shepherd's Bush. Buy a ticket because if you love the record, hopefully you'll love the live show even more. **DL**

The autumn dates begin on October 2.

FRANK HOENSCH/REDFERNS

Lita Ford

The former Runaways guitarist plays rare UK shows.

Former Runaways guitarist and current solo artist Lita Ford previews a pair of rare British gigs alongside US all-girl rockers Vixen. Under the banner Girls Night Out, the package also includes Bobbie Dazzle in London and Chez Kane in Wolverhampton. This one could get messy!

These will be you first UK shows since 2017. For someone who was born in London, that seems an awfully long time.
I know. But since Covid so much has changed with the world. Air fares have increased, for instance, and there has been a lot to navigate. But finally it's time to come home and wreak some havoc.

I grew up in the States but London will always be dear to me. I was born and raised there. I remember playing with The Runaways in London in the seventies and later as a solo artist, hanging out in the rock clubs. Coming back with Vixen it's going to be a badass couple of shows.

Are the ladies from Vixen friends of yours?
Yeah. Their story is inspiring. They've been through so much since their first hit in 1988 with *Edge Of A Broken Heart*. Their original guitarist [Jan Kuehnemund] died [in 2013], but Roxy [Petrucci], the drummer, has been the glue that held the band together. Hopefully we can pack these places out and get condensation dripping down the walls.

Are you familiar with the special guests, Bobbie Dazzle and Chez Kane?
No, but I've heard good things about them.

Chez Kane play 80s-style melodic rock, and Bobbie Dazzle are more of a glitter-rock-type thing. Both are British and with great female singers.
That's why it's a girl's night out. But boys are welcome too.

In the half-century since the formation of The Runaways, the world of hard rock now includes many, many more women than ever before. You must feel pride in having been a big part of that sea change?
Yeah, definitely. It's good to be the queen. Back in 1976 people didn't know what to make of The Runaways. They labelled us as teenage jailbait or punk rock. I didn't care about labels. Just give me my guitar. I just wanted to play. I wasn't trying to copy any other guitarists – not even my favourite, Ritchie Blackmore – I wanted to be Lita. And now it's gone full circle. It's okay to be a good-looking girl and to be able to sing your arse off. It's acceptable.

And it's about time for that acceptability.
Yes! But back then people just didn't complete the dots. Well, believe your ears and eyes because this is what you are seeing and hearing.

You are also the special guest on Saturday night at the Steelhouse Festival. Know anything about that?
No. Only that W.A.S.P. are also on the bill.

Steelhouse takes place at the top of a Welsh mountain. The views are great.
Wow. With my luck it'll probably rain, but we don't care. We've played in all kinds of storms. Volcanos. Hurricanes. Nothing can stop us.

You're working on your first album of all-original material since *Living Like A Runaway* back in 2012. When might we hear it?
The record is finished. We're still trying to find the right label, but it's coming. What does it sound like? There are *lots* of guitars – but you knew that, right? The songs are themed. It's a dark fairytale of an album, but in sort of a Disneyland way. It's very cool. **DL**

Ford's UK visit ends at Steelhouse on July 26.

> "R.E.M. felt comfortable enough to check us out. And they seemed to enjoy it enough to jump on stage."

Michael Shannon & Jason Narducy

The pair and their 'covers' band present the music of R.E.M.'s album *Fables Of The Reconstruction*.

Indie guitar veteran Jason Narducy and Oscar-nominated actor and singer Michael Shannon have been performing one-off gigs together for more than a decade, honouring songs by Lou Reed, Neil Young, Bob Dylan and more. Their latest (and most substantial) venture is the music of R.E.M., which began in 2023 with *Murmur*. After a run of successful US dates, their six-piece band bring 1985's *Fables Of The Reconstruction* to the UK this summer.

How has the *Fables* tour been so far?
Michael Shannon: The shows were pretty thrilling. I was kind of sad when it was over. But I'm looking forward to playing the UK, because I've never performed music in public there. It's crossing another threshold for me.
Jason Narducy: I recently did six weeks with Bob Mould, who I've been playing with for twenty-odd years, and it's eighty-minute shows of pummelling punk rock. So this R.E.M. project is very different from everything else I do, because we're playing someone else's music. I was pleasantly surprised when we played shows to sold-out venues.

How did you get under the skin of these songs?
Shannon: I just listened to *Fables* over and over and over, including every night before a show. It's the same way if I'm acting in something: I study the script and become kind of obsessed with it. It's really just an act of devotion. And the songs mean a lot to me personally, because I started listening to R.E.M. as a kid.
Narducy: For me and probably for [fellow guitarist] Dag Juhlin, there's this technical hump where you've just got to learn the songs and burn them into your cranium. And not just *Fables*, there's this huge, forty-song list that we kept adding to. But once I get past that challenge, then it becomes emotional and I can lose myself in the music.
Shannon: One of the things that I've discovered is that R.E.M. were at a crossroads during *Fables*. There was a possibility, actually, that they may have stopped right there. They were maxed out. They'd released two masterpieces [*Murmur* and *Reckoning*] and had been touring non-stop, but they weren't making any money. And they were going a little bonkers. And I sense that in the album in a way that I never did before. I feel like it's imbued with a certain desperation.

You managed to reunite R.E.M. for the first time in seventeen years this February, when they joined you on stage at their old stomping ground, the 40 Watt Club in Athens, Georgia. Did it give this project a certain validation?
Shannon: It would be disingenuous to say that it was something that we orchestrated in any way, shape or form. It just sort of happened. They had a curiosity about what we were doing, because they're still such a part of that community. So it made sense for them to say: "What are these upstarts doing?" And Mike [Mills] had already joined us on stage in Chicago [in July 2023].
Narducy: I've known Mike Mills for a while, so I think part of it is that there was already some trust there, because we all had a connection to one or two of R.E.M. That probably made them feel comfortable enough to check us out. And they seemed to enjoy it enough to jump on stage.

I believe you're going to tour *Life's Rich Pageant* for its fortieth anniversary next year. Any plans beyond that?
Narducy: Everybody in the band has the stuff that they spend most of the year doing, and then this is *fun*. And I like keeping it that way, so committing to five or six years down the line just feels like, okay, let's not think about this as some kind of routine.
Shannon: But I can tell you that the theme park is opening in 2027 [much laughter]. I'll be there three or four days a week in my outfit.
Narducy: The twist is that we'll only play Third Eye Blind songs. **RH**

The Fables Of The Reconstruction UK tour runs from August 19 to 26.

CHRISTY BUSH/PRESS

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CLASSIC ROCK HAMMER PROG BLUES

Tour Dates

THE 69 EYES, SOUTH OF SALEM

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 2
Edinburgh	La Belle Angelle	Oct 3
Manchester	New Century Hall	Oct 4
London	Islington Academy	Oct 5

AC/DC

Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	Aug 21

AIRBOURNE

Nottingham	Rock City	Jan 30
Birmingham	Academy	Feb 24
Manchester	Academy	Feb 25
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Feb 28
Norwich	UEA	Mar 2
Southampton	Guildhall	Mar 3

ARCH ENEMY, AMORPHIS, ELUVEITIE, GATECREEPER

Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Oct 30
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 31
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 1

ELLES BAILEY

Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Aug 2
Sunderland	Fire Station	Aug 3

KRIS BARRAS' HOLLOW SOULS

Bedford	Esquires	Oct 16
Chesterfield	Real Time Live	Oct 17
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 18
Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	Oct 19
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts	Oct 22
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 23
Leek	Foxlowe Arts	Oct 24
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 25
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	Oct 26
Grimsby	Docks Academy	Oct 29
Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 30
Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	Oct 31
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Nov 1
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Nov 2
Glasgow	Oran Mor	Nov 4
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Nov 5
York	Crescent	Nov 6
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 7
Southampton	Suburbia	Nov 8
Tavistock	The Wharf	Nov 9

BATTLE BEAST, DOMINIUM, MAJESTICA

Birmingham	Institute	Oct 21
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 22
Bristol	Academy	Oct 23
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 24

BLAZE BAYLEY

Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 1
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Sep 2
Norwich	Brickmakers	Sep 4
Gravesend	Red Lion	Sep 5
Worcester	Angel Of Rage	Sep 6
Grimsby	Yardbirds	Sep 7
Worthing	The Factory	Sep 25
Newport	The Patriot	Sep 26
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Sep 27

GRAHAM BONNET BAND

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 22
Glasgow	Slay	Oct 23
Wakefield	Venue 23	Oct 24
Crumlin	The Patriot	Oct 25
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 26
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 29
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 30
Plymouth	Quad Theatre	Oct 31
Bristol	Lost Horizon	Nov 1
Southampton	1865	Nov 2

BRAVE RIVAL

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Jul 19
Sheffield	The Greystones	Jul 20
Cambridge	Rock Festival	Aug 3
Brighton	Komedia	Aug 8
Buxton	Blues Festival	Aug 9
Stockport	Firevolt Festival	Aug 10
Colne	R&B Fest	Aug 24
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 4
Southampton	The Brook	Sep 5
Barnoldswick	Music & Arts Centre	Oct 12
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 15
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 16
Aldershot	West End Centre	Oct 18
Lincoln	Drill Hall	Oct 26
Whitby	Rocks	Nov 7
Looe	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	Dec 5
Bristol	Louisiana	Dec 6
Staines	Thameside Brewery	Dec 7
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Dec 19
Hastings	The Carlisle	Dec 21

CARDINAL BLACK

Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 2
Manchester	Academy 2	Oct 3
Dublin	Opium	Oct 9
Belfast	Limelight	Oct 10
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 16
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 17
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Oct 19
Bristol	SWX	Oct 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 24
Brighton	Concorde 2	Oct 28
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 29
London	Camden Koko	Oct 30

CATS IN SPACE

Grimsthorpe Castle	Nene Valley Festival	Sep 5
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 28
Wimborne	Tivoli Theatre	Oct 9
Lincoln	Drill Hall	Oct 12
Glasgow	Cottiers Theatre	Oct 14
Hexham	Queens Hall	Oct 15
Stockport	The Forum	Oct 16
Bath	Komedia	Oct 21
Bromsgrove	The Artrix	Oct 22

CATS IN SPACE, ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Bath	Komedia	Oct 21

COLOSSEUM, SOFT MACHINE

London	Sloane Square Cadogan Hall	Nov 27

ALICE COOPER, BOBBIE DAZZLE

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Jul 22
Edinburgh	Playhouse	Jul 23

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Plymouth	Barbican Theatre	Jul 17
Lewes	Conservative Club	Jul 18
Maidstone	Maid Of Stone Festival	Jul 19

ROGER DALTREY

Halifax	Piece Hall	Jul 30
Margate	Dreamland	Aug 8

THE DEAD DAISIES, SCARLET REBELS, DAN BYRNE

Belfast	Limelight	Aug 13
Edinburgh	Academy	Aug 14
Newcastle	NX	Aug 15
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Aug 16
Cardiff	Tramshed	Aug 19
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Aug 20
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Aug 21

DEFTONES

Halifax	Piece Hall	Jul 24
St Austell	Eden Sessions	Jul 26

DINOSAUR PILE-UP

Birmingham	XOYO	Sep 5
Bristol	Electric	Sep 6
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 9
Manchester	New Century Hall	Sep 11
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Sep 13

THE DOOBIE BROTHERS

London	O2 Arena	Jul 19
Dublin	3 Arena	Jul 21

EXTREME

Birmingham	Academy	Aug 6
Halifax	Piece Hall	Aug 7

FEEDER

Leeds	Academy	Sep 26
London	Brixton Academy	Sep 27
Manchester	Academy	Oct 2
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 3
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 9
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 11

FLORENCE BLACK

Dublin	Academy 2	Sep 12
Belfast	Voodoo	Sep 13
Glasgow	Garage	Sep 15
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Sep 16
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Sep 19
Birmingham	Academy 2	Sep 20
Norwich	Waterfront	Sep 21
London	Islington Academy	Sep 23
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Sep 24
Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 25
Manchester	Academy 2	Sep 27

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

HALESTORM

Lzzy Hale and co's reputation as an affable, heavyweight band continues to grow, and live they're a blast. Go and see.

See below for dates. Currently November 20 to November 26.

FM

Grimsby	Docks Academy	Sep 4
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Sep 5
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Sep 6
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Sep 7
Bristol	The Fleece	Sep 11
Cardiff	Globe	Sep 12
Gloucester	Guildhall	Sep 13
Colchester	Arts Centre	Sep 14
London	Islington Academy	Sep 18
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 19
Manchester	Academy	Sep 20
Farsley	Old Woollen	Sep 21
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 27
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Sep 28

FORBIDDEN

London	Tufnell Park Dome	Aug 12

LITA FORD, VIXEN

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jul 23
London	IndigO2	Jul 24

THE GEORGIA THUNDERBOLTS

London	Islington Academy	Jul 18
Maidstone	Maid Of Stone Festival	Jul 19

Recommended

GRAHAM GOULDMAN, HEART FULL OF SONGS

Bath	Komedia	Sep 25
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Sep 26
Abergavenny	Borough Theatre	Sep 27
Basingstoke	Haymarket Theatre	Sep 28
Brighton	Komedia	Sep 29
Rayleigh	Mill Arts Centre	Sep 30

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

GRAND SLAM

Swindon	The Victoria	Sep 4
Hastings	The Carlisle	Sep 5
Northampton	Black Prince	Sep 6

HALESTORM, BLOODYWOOD, KELSY KARTER & THE HEROINES

Cardiff	Utilita Arena	Nov 20
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 21
Birmingham	bp pulse LIVE	Nov 23
Manchester	Arena	Nov 24
London	O2 Arena	Nov 26

ROY HARPER, NICK HARPER

Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Sep 27
London	Palladium	Sep 29
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 2

JUSTIN HAYWARD

Cardiff	New Theatre	Oct 19
Truro	Hall For Cornwall	Oct 20
Weston-Super-Mare	Playhouse	Oct 21
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Oct 23
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 24
Basingstoke	The Anvil	Oct 25
Llandudno	Venue Cymru	Oct 27
New Brighton	Floral Pavilion	Oct 28
Swindon	Wyvern	Oct 30
London	Cadogan Hall	Oct 31
Brighton	Theatre Royal	Nov 2
Birmingham	Town Hall	Nov 3

HEAVY PETTIN

Barnoldswick	Arts Centre	Jun 27
London	Islington Academy 2	Jun 28
Hull	Wrecking Ball Arts Centre	Jul 10
Newcastle	Cluny	Jul 11
Glasgow	Slay	Jul 12
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 13

HELLOWEEN, BEAST IN BLACK

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 25

HILLBILLY VEGAS

Maidstone	Maid Of Stone Festival	Jul 18
Sheffield	The Greystones	Jul 23
Reading	Face Bar	Jul 24
Derbyshire	Rock & Blues Custom Show	Jul 25
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 26

THE HOT DAMN!

Matlock Bath	Grand Pavilion	Oct 4
Southampton	Joiners	Oct 5
Bristol	The Exchange	Oct 8
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 9
Leeds	Key Club	Oct 10
Cambridge	Mash Club	Oct 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 12

GLENN HUGHES

Bristol	Academy	Oct 14
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 15
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 17
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 21
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 24
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 25

BILLY IDOL, NEW MODEL ARMY

London	Wembley Arena	Jun 24

LAURENCE JONES

Basingstoke	Central Studio	Oct 2
Blackpool Waterloo FY4		Oct 16
Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 17
Leicester	International Arts	Nov 2
Northampton	Black Prince	Dec 12

JUDAS PRIEST, PHIL CAMPBELL AND THE BASTARD SONS

Scarborough	Open Air Theatre	Jul 23

KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, HATEBREED, FIT FOR AN AUTOPSY, DECAPITATED

Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Oct 8
Manchester	Academy	Oct 9
Newcastle	NX	Oct 11
Cardiff	Depot	Oct 12
Leeds	Academy	Oct 13
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 15
London	Wembley Arena	Oct 17
Belfast	Telegraph Building	Oct 19
Dublin	National Stadium	Oct 20

KERRY KING

Manchester	Academy 2 Aug 12	
Bristol	SWX	Aug 13

KING KING, LAURA EVANS

Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 1
Lincoln	Drill Hall	Oct 2

JO HALE/REDFERNS

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 4
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 6
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 7
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 8
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 10
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 11
Bath	Komedia	Oct 12
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Oct 14
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 15
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 16
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 18
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 19
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Oct 21
Stockton On Tees	Arc	Oct 22
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Oct 31
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 2

KIRA MAC

Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 19
Wakefield	Venue 23	Sep 20
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Sep 21
Southampton	The Brook	Sep 24
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 25
Chester	Live Rooms	Sep 26
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Sep 27
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Sep 28
Brighton	Komedia	Sep 30
London	Islington Academy 2	Oct 1
Bristol	Thekla	Oct 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 3

LARKIN POE

Manchester	Academy	Oct 17
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 18
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 19
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 21
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 22

LAZULI

Stourport	Fusion Festival	Aug 7
Bango	Neuadd Ogwen	Aug 8
Dublin	Sound House	Aug 9
Sheffield	Local Authority	Aug 11
London	Putney Half Moon	Aug 12
Southampton	1865	Aug 13
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Aug 14
Sudbury	Arts Centre	Aug 16

THE LAZYS

Glasgow	Audio	Aug 7
Leeds	Key Club	Aug 8
Stockport	Firevolt Festival	Aug 10
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 3
Southampton	Joiners	Sep 4
Cardiff	The Globe	Sep 5
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 6

LITTLE FEAT

London	IndigO2	Jul 29

LYNYRD SKYNYRD, BLACKBERRY SMOKE

Brighton	Centre	Jul 18
London	Wembley Arena	Jul 19

MAGNUM – A TRIBUTE TO TONY CLARKIN

Holmfirth	Picturedome	Oct 2
Glasgow	Garage	Oct 3
Cambridge	Junction	Oct 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 6

YNGWIE MALMSTEEN

Dublin	Button Factory	Jul 31
Manchester	The Ritz	Aug 1
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Aug 2
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Aug 3

MAN

Bristol	Thunderbolt	Aug 14
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Aug 15
St Leonards-on-Sea	The Piper	Aug 16
Faversham	A New Day Festival	Aug 17

MASSIVE WAGONS

Lancaster	University Great Hall	Sep 19, 20

ROBIN McAULEY, LYIN' RAMPANT

London	Camden Underworld	Aug 7
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Aug 8
Crumlin	The Patriot	Aug 9
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Aug 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Aug 15
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Aug 16

METALLICA

Dublin	Avia Stadium	Jun 19, 21
Glasgow	Hampden Park	Jun 25
Cardiff	Principality Stadium	Jun 28
London	London Stadium	Jul 3, 5

ALANIS MORISSETTE

London	O2 Arena	Jul 27

LUKE MORLEY, WILLIE DOWLING

Manchester	RNCM	Sep 11
Glasgow	St Luke's	Sep 12
Sunderland	Fire Station	Sep 14
Leeds	City Varieties	Sep 15
Bristol	St George's Hall	Sep 16
Brighton	Old Market	Sep 17
London	Bloomsbury Theatre	Sep 19

GRAHAM NASH

Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 4
York	Barbican	Oct 5
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 7
Cardiff	New Theatre	Oct 9
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 10
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Oct 12
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 13
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 15
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 6
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Oct 18
London	Palladium	Oct 19

NEW FOUND GLORY, REAL FRIENDS, KOYO

Birmingham	Academy	Oct 10
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Oct 11
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 12
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 14
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 15
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 17
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 18

GARY NUMAN

Glasgow	Academy	Nov 11
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 12
Leeds	Academy	Nov 14
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 15
Bristol	Beacon	Nov 16
Cardiff	University	Nov 18
Bournemouth	Academy	Nov 19
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 21
Brighton	Centre	Nov 22
Southend-on-Sea	Cliffs Pavilion	Nov 23
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 25
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 26
Norwich	UEA	Nov 27
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 29
Liverpool	Academy	Nov 30

OASIS, RICHARD ASHCROFT

Manchester	Heaton Park	Jul 19, 20
London	Wembley Stadium	Jul 25-28, 30, Aug 2, 3
Edinburgh	Murrayfield Stadium	Aug 8, 9, 12
Dublin	Croke Park	Aug 16, 17

PARKWAY DRIVE

London	Wembley Arena	Oct 4
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 5
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 6

POWERWOLF, HAMMERFALL, WIND ROSE

London	Wembley Arena	Mar 7

PRAYING MANTIS, GYPSY'S KISS

Bedford	Esquires	Oct 17
Worthing	The Factory	Oct 18
London	Raynes Park The Cavern	Oct 19

PRETTY BOY FLOYD, JETBOY

Belfast	Deer's Head	Sep 3
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 4
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 5
Leicester	Academy 2	Sep 6
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Sep 7
Stockport	Holy Diver	Sep 9
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 10

THE PSYCHEDELIC FURS, ANJA HUWE

Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Oct 22
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 24
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 25
Manchester	Albert Hall	Oct 27
Bristol	Academy	Oct 28
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 30
London	Palladium	Oct 31

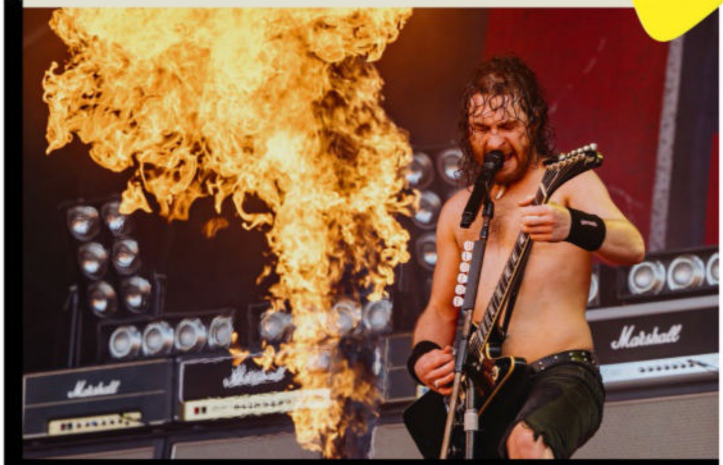
PUBLIC IMAGE LTD

Sheffield	Leadmill	Jul 30
Northampton	Roadmender	Jul 31
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Aug 1
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Aug 7
Durham	Stone Valley Festival	Aug 8
Coventry	Empire	Aug 9
Cork City	Hall	Aug 15
Belfast	Putting The Fast In Belfast	Aug 16

REEF, KERBDOG

Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 16
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 17
Norwich	UEA	Oct 18
Bournemouth	Academy	Oct 23
Bristol	Academy	Oct 24
Southampton	1865	Oct 25
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 30
Liverpool	Academy	Oct 31
Tenby	De Valence Pavilion	Nov 1
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 2
Leeds	Academy	Nov 6
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 7
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 8

AIRBOURNE



They're six months or more away, but these route-one no-nonsense Aussie rockers are definitely worth the wait.

See previous page for dates. Currently January 30 to March 3.

TERRY REID

Bilston	Robin 2	Sep 11
Dublin	Arthur's Blues & Jazz	Sep 13, 14
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Sep 16
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Sep 17
St Ives	Theatre	Sep 18
Cardiff	The Gate	Sep 19
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Sep 21
Sheffield	The Greystones	Sep 22
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 24
Glasgow	Cottiers	Sep 25
Pocklington	Arts Centre	Sep 26
Malvern	Cube	Sep 28
London	Putney Half Moon	Sep 30
London	Camden Jazz Café	Oct 1
Cambridge	Portland Arms	Oct 3

RIVAL SONS

York	Barbican	Jul 24
Bournemouth	Academy	Aug 1
Liverpool	University	Aug 2
Stockton-on-Tees	Globe	Oct 3
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Oct 7
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Oct 8

ROXETTE

London	Wembley Arena	Dec 1

DARIUS RUCKER

Belfast	SSE Arena	Sep 29
Glasgow	The Hydro	Sep 30
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Oct 2
Manchester	AO Arena	Oct 3
London	O2 Arena	Oct 5

TODD RUNDGREN

Birmingham	The Alexandra	Oct 28
London	Palladium	Oct 29

SAXON, DIRKSCHNEIDER

Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 4
Dublin	Olympia	Nov 5
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 7
Sheffield	Octagon	Nov 8
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 9
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 11
Bristol	Beacon	Nov 13
Wolverhampton	Civic Hall	Nov 14
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 15
Cardiff	Great Hall	Nov 16

CONNOR SELBY

Barnard Castle	The Witham	Sep 17
London	King's Cross Kings Place 2	Sep 18
Stowmarket	John Peel Centre	Sep 19
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Sep 21
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Sep 24
Manchester	Hallé St Peter's	Sep 25
Nottingham	Metronome	Sep 26
Bristol	Beacon Hall	Sep 27
Axminster	Guildhall	Sep 28

MICHAEL SHANNON & JASON NARDUCY

Manchester	Gorilla	Aug 19
Glasgow	The Garage	Aug 20
London	The Garage	Aug 22
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 25
Bristol Thekla	Aug 26	

Recommended

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

Bath	The Forum	Sep 24
York	Barbican	Sep 25
Wolverhampton	Wulfrun Hall	Sep 27
Eastbourne	Devonshire Park Theatre	Sep 28
London	Cadogan Hall	Oct 9

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD, BOBBY RUSH

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Jul 18

SIGUR RÓS

London	Royal Albert Hall	Sep 30-Oct 5

DAVID SINCLAIR FOUR

Brentford	The Brook	Jul 25
High Wycombe	Dusty's	Aug 6
Sutton	Sound Lounge	Aug 22
Northampton	King Billy Music Bar	Aug 24
Acton	Gunnersbury Garden Estate	Sep 20
Carlisle	Blues Festival	Oct 10
Glasgow	Cathcart Castle Club	Oct 11
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Oct 12
Richmond	Kew Village Market	Nov 2
Cornwall	Looe Blues Festival	Dec 6
Ruislip	Tropic At Ruislip	Dec 14

SKINDRED

Brighton	Concorde 2	Sep 18
Keele	University	Oct 16
Tenby	De Valence Pavilion	Oct 17
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 18
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 23
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 24
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Oct 25
Warrington	Parr Hall	Oct 30
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 31
Middlesbrough	Town Hall	Nov 1
Wakefield	Venue 23	Nov 2
Torquay	Arena	Nov 7
Bournemouth	Academy	Nov 8
Folkestone	Leas Cliff Hall	Nov 14

SMASHING PUMPKINS, SKUNK ANANSIE, WHITE LIES, MORE

London	Gunnersbury Park	Aug 10

PATTI SMITH

Dublin	3 Arena	Oct 6
London	Palladium	Oct 12, 13

SON OF MAN, THE MIGHTY RA

London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Aug 9

SPARKS

Edinburgh	Playhouse	Jul 18
Wolverhampton	The Halls	Jul 19

AL STEWART

Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 1
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 3

TODD OWYOUNG

Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 5
York	Barbican	Oct 7
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Oct 8
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 10
Guildford	G Live	Oct 11
Birmingham	Alexandra	Oct 12
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 15
London	Palladium	Oct 15

STONE BROKEN, JAYLER, SAM MILLAR

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Aug 30

THE STRANGLERS, BUZZCOCKS

Leeds	Academy	Oct 17
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 18
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 21
Edinburgh	Academy	Oct 23
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Oct 24
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 28
Brighton	Dome	Oct 29
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 31, Nov 1

STRAY

Bedford	Esquires	Jul 28
Hastings	The Carlisle	Nov 28

GEOFF TATE

Glasgow	Classic Grand	Jul 31

TEN

Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Jul 27
Gravesend	Red Lion	Aug 9
Bradford	Nightrain	Aug 30
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 6
Sheffield	Corporation	Sep 13
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 25
Newport	The Patriot	Nov 8
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Nov 15
Layton	Institute	Nov 22

TEN YEARS AFTER, JOHN VERITY

London	Gr Portland St 229 Club	Jan 21

TESTAMENT, OBITUARY

Bristol	Beacon	Oct 7
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 8
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Oct 9
Manchester	Academy	Oct 10
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 11

THOSE DAMN CROWS

Leicester	Academy	Oct 17
Leeds	Stylus	Oct 18
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Oct 20
Glasgow	SWG3	Oct 21
Manchester	Albert Hall	Oct 22
Bristol	Crane	Oct 24
Plymouth	Pavilions	Oct 26
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 28
Birmingham	Institute	Oct 30
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 31

A THOUSAND HORSES

Glasgow	Saint Luke's Church	Jul 30
Manchester	Academy	Jul 31
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Aug 1

KAVUS TORABI

Swansea	Elysium Gallery & Bar	Aug 2
Chelmsford	Hot Box	Aug 6
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Aug 7
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Aug 9
Builth Wells	Kozfest	Aug 10
Preston	The Ferret	Aug 14
Todmorden	Golden Lion	Aug 15

TYLA'S DOGS D'AMOUR

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Jul 18
Nottingham	Old Wine Vaults	Jul 26
Crumlin	The Patriot	Sep 19
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 3
Preston	Vinyl Tap	Oct 4
London	Stratford Cart & Horses	Nov 13
Gravesend	Red Lion	Nov 14
St Leonards-on-Sea	The Piper	Nov 15

BONNIE TYLER

London	IndigO2	Jul 25

THE UTOPIA STRONG

Bristol	The Cube	Oct 10
Glastonbury	King Arthur	Oct 11
Guildford	Boileroom	Oct 14
St Albans	The Horn	Oct 15
London	Dalston Cafe Oto	Oct 16
Brighton	Hope & Ruin	Oct 17
Ramsgate	Music Hall	Oct 18
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Oct 19
Sheffield	Sidney & Matilda	Oct 21
Edinburgh	Sneaky Pete's	Oct 22
Hexham	Allendale Village Hall	Oct 23
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Oct 24

ADRIAN VANDENBERG PLAYS WHITESNAKE

Dublin	Opium	Oct 11

Belfast	Empire	Oct 12
Newcastle	Digital	Oct 14
Manchester	Rebellion	Oct 15
Glasgow	Classic Grand	Oct 16
Crumlin	Patriot	Oct 18
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Oct 19
London	Camden Underworld	Oct 22
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 23
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 24
Wakefield	Venue 23	Oct 27
Hastings	The Carlisle	Oct 28
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 29

JIMMIE VAUGHN & THE TILT-A-WHIRL BAND

London	Gr Portland Street 229 Club	Jul 28, 29

ALLY VENABLE

Manchester	Night & Day Café	Oct 14
Edinburgh	La Belle Angelle	Oct 15
Nottingham	Bodega	Oct 16
London	Highbury Garage	Oct 17
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	Oct 18

THE VINTAGE CARAVAN

Margate	Rock Festival	Oct 25
London	Camden Assembly	Oct 26
Brighton	Dust	Oct 27
Southampton	1865	Oct 28
Bristol	The Exchange	Oct 29
Birmingham	Mama Roux	Oct 30
Newcastle	Think Tank	Oct 31

Recommended

VON HERTZEN BROTHERS

Southampton	1865	Aug 7
London	Tufnell Park Dome	Aug 8
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Aug 9
Stockport	Firevolt Festival	Aug 10

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

RICK WAKEMAN, RETURN OF THE CAPED CRUSADER

Aylesbury	Waterside Arts	Oct 12
York	Barbican	Oct 14
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Oct 15
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Oct 16
Gateshead	Glasshouse	Oct 18
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Oct 19
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Oct 21
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Oct 22
Northampton	Royal & Derngate	Oct 23
Eastbourne	Congress Theatre	Oct 24
Bournemouth	Pavilion	Oct 25
Torquay	Princess Theatre	Oct 26
London	Palladium	Oct 28
Bristol	Beacon	Oct 29

WARRIOR SOUL, SPREAD EAGLE, NEW GENERATION SUPERSTARS

Southampton	Suburbia	Aug 29
Brighton	Dust	Aug 30
Swansea	Sin City	Aug 31
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 2
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Sep 3
Stockport	Spinning Top	Sep 4
Derby	Victoria Inn	Sep 5
London	Camden Underworld	Sep 6
Leicester	HRH Sleaze Festival	Sep 7
Birmingham	Subside	Sep 8
St Albans	The Horn	Sep 10
Bradford	Nightrain	Sep 11
Crumlin	The Patriot	Sep 12
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Sep 13
Preston	Vinyl Tap	Sep 14

RICKY WARWICK & THE FIGHTING HEARTS, CJ WILDHEART

Inverness	An Seomar	Sep 13
Edinburgh	Liquid Rooms	Sep 14
Newcastle	The Cluny	Sep 16
Carlisle	Brickyard	Sep 17
Manchester	Rebellion	Sep 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 20
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Sep 21
Cambridge	Junction 2	Sep 22
Southampton	1865	Sep 23
Bristol	The Exchange	Sep 25
London	Oxford Street 100	Club 26
Swansea	Sin City	Sep 27

W.A.S.P.

Norwich	UEA	Jul 20
Glasgow	Academy	Jul 25
Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 26
Nottingham	Rock City	Jul 27
Newcastle	City Hall	Sep 26
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Sep 27
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Sep 28

WEDNESDAY 13

Buckley	Tivoli	Jul 21

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

BLOODSTOCK

Machine Head, Mastodon, Trivium and Gojira head up this year's annual heavyweight bash. Cum on feel the noize.

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 7-10

MARIE KORNER

Ebbw Vale	Steelhouse Festival	Jul 25
Birmingham	The Asylum	Jul 26
Preston	The Blitz	Jul 27
Sheffield	Corporation	Jul 29
Brighton	Chalk	Jul 30
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 4
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 5
Leeds	Warehouse	Nov 6
Newcastle	Digital	Nov 7
Glasgow	Slay	Nov 8
Hull	Asylum	Nov 9

THE WHITE BUFFALO, CAM COLE

London	Kentish Town Frum	Aug 28

DANNY WILDHEART & THE UK REPROBATES

Norwich	The Brickmakers	Aug 29
Corby	Steel Bar Venue	Aug 30
Newcastle	Trillians	Sep 7

THE WILDHEARTS

Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Jul 24

WOLFMOTHER

London	Islington Academy	Jul 29
Manchester	The Ritz	Jul 30

WOLFSBANE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jul 20
Wakefield	Venue 23	Jul 24

YUSUF/CAT STEVENS

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Sep 6
Bristol	Beacon	Sep 8
Birmingham	Alexandra Theatre	Sep 11
London	Theatre Royal Drury Lane	Sep 14
Manchester	Bridgewater Hall	Sep 16
Dublin	Olympia Theatre	Sep 18
Glasgow	Royal Concert Hall	Sep 22

Festivals

ARCTANGENT
GODSPEED! YOU BLACK EMPEROR, KARNIVOOL, MELVINS, MORE

Bristol	Fernhill Farm	Aug 13-16

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
MACHINE HEAD, MASTODON, TRIVIUM, GOJIRA, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 7-10

FAIRPORT CONVENTION'S CROPREDY
FAIRPORT CONVENTION, ALBERT LEE, TREVOR HORN BAND, MORE

Oxfordshire	Cropredy	Aug 7-9

FIREVOLT
QUIREBOYS, VON HERTZEN BROTHERS, TYGERS OF PAN TANG, MORE

Stockport	Whitebottom Farm	Aug 7-10

HAMMERDOWN FESTIVAL
TYGERS OF PAN TANG, DEMON, ONE LAST DAY, MORE

Brighton	Chalk	Jul 19, 20

HARD ROCK HELL SLEAZE
BABYLON AD, JETBOY, PRETTY BOY FLOYD, MORE

Leicester	Academy	Sep 5-7

HELLA ROCK
VIRGINMARYS, FURY, TATTOO MOLLY, MORE

Coventry	Empire	Aug 30

JUST PUSH PLAY
VIRGINMARYS, DAN BYRNE, GORILLA RIOT, MORE

Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Sep 6

KOZFEST
SYSTEM 7, HAWKLORDS, THE BEVIS FROND, MORE

Builth Wells	Penmenau Farm	Aug 8-10

MAID OF STONE
MICHAEL SCHENKER'S UFO YEARS, BLACK STONE CHERRY, SWEET, MORE

Maidstone	Mote Park	Jul 18-20

NENE VALLEY ROCK FEST
ARTHUR BROWN, DARE, CATS IN SPACE, MORE

Lincs	Grimsthorpe Castle	Sep 6

NORTHERN KIN
MICHAEL SCHENKER'S UFO YEARS, MIDGE URE, UNDERTONES, MORE

Durham	Thornley Hall	Aug 1-3

NOZFEST
SCARLET REBELS, KIM JENNETT, DOOMSDAY OUTLAW, MORE

Southampton	1865	Aug 16

NWOCR LIVEFEST
CATS IN SPACE, THESE WICKED RIVERS, EMPYRE, MORE

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Sep 27, 28

PROG FOR PEART
AMAROK, KALLE WALLNER, COMEDY OF ERRORS, MORE

Abingdon	The Northcourt	Jul 18, 19

REBELLION
THE DAMNED, HUGH CORNWELL, MORE

Blackpool	Winter Gardens	Aug 7-10

STEELHOUSE
W.A.S.P., THOSE DAMN CROWS, LITA FORD, MORE

Ebbw Vale	Hafod-y-Dafal Farm	Jul 25-27

STONEDEAD
THE ALMIGHTY, THE DEAD DAISIES, SWEET, MORE

Newark	Showground	Aug 23

WINTER'S END
ARENA, WOBBLER, ANTIMATTER, MORE

Chepstow	Drill Hall	Apr 24-27

Y NOT
THE PRODIGY, PRIMAL SCREAM, MORE

Derby	Pikehall	Jul 31-Aug 3

Bruce Dickinson: more costume changes than London Fashion Week.

'Iron Maiden showing that, 50 years in, they can still surprise us.'

Steve Harris in his classic foot-monitor interaction pose.

New drummer Simon Dawson: deserving the applause he gets.

Iron Maiden

Budapest Sportaréna

Delivering oldies, favourites, classics and rare cuts – and watched over by a digitised Eddie – it's a Maiden show like no other.

★ Tonight is the first night of the Run For Your Lives world tour, and Budapest is absolutely brimming with Eddie shirts, a black-clad horde taking over parts of the city centre as queues begin to form at merch stands near the venue hours before show time. Yep, this is a biggie alright.

Before we get to the main event, there's the matter of Halestorm, now bona fide arena headliners in their own right but supporting Iron Maiden for the very first time. It's an occasion not lost on Lzzy Hale, who wins over the notoriously stubborn Maiden faithful by nearly blowing the roof off the Sportsaréna with those powerhouse vocals. "My name is Lzzy and I have been listening to Iron Maiden since I was eleven years old," she roars, to wide approval. Judging by the fresh songs Halestorm play tonight – of which *Fallen Star* brings to mind Black Album-era Metallica with its thunderous groove and sheer power – incoming new album *Everest* is going to be a cracker.

With all due respect to Halestorm, though, tonight is really about one band and one band only. As the PA cranks up and *Doctor, Doctor* blares out around the joint, just over 12,000 Maiden fanatics let out an almighty cheer and it's time to see just what Eddie and the guys have up their sleeves this time out. Immediately, those rumours of a snazzy new stage show are shown to be spot-on: a giant, glistening LCD screen sparks into life, bathing the Sportsaréna in a familiar yellow hue as the grotty back streets of East London are brought to life on screen.

Then, *Murders In The Rue Morgue* kicks off for the first time live in 20 years and we're off to the races. Bruce Dickinson, dressed in a leather biker jacket – his first of about 200 costumes tonight – and with his long hair slicked back into a ponytail, bounces on stage flanked by his bandmates as we are treated to the first of four classic, Di'Anno-era songs in a row. "The whole fucking world is watching this show," a grinning Dickinson says after the first drop of *Killers*' scintillating title song since 1999. "You ain't seen nothing yet!" Given we're less than a handful of songs in and we've already had some super-rare cuts, those impressive new screens and even our first live Eddie – an updated version of the *Killers*-era mascot, axe still in hand – it's a bold promise, but one that is lived up to.

A combination of Hall Of Fame-worthy Iron Maiden bangers (*Clairvoyant! Seventh Son! Rime Of The Ancient Mariner!*) and some truly jaw-dropping digital visuals (highlights include a wonderfully rendered world of swashbuckling seafarers and ghastly ghouls for *Mariner* and a thrilling aerial battle for *Aces High*), this is an Iron Maiden show unlike any other. It's a celebration of the past with an eye to the future, Maiden stepping out of their comfort zone with a show that looks and feels genuinely fresh and cutting edge.

New man behind the kit Simon Dawson does a fine job holding it all together – no easy task when you're balancing pacey punk ragers with expansive prog-metal epics, and playing in one of the biggest bands in the world – and the applause he gets when Dickinson gives him a couple of shout-outs is well earned.

Nitpicks? We wouldn't have minded seeing *Infinite Dreams* finally unearthed again, and some fans may baulk at Eddie now being digitised. Really, though, this is all about Iron Maiden showing that, 50 years in, they can still surprise us. And that really is something.

Merlin Alderslade

JOHN McMURTRIE

'Even among this parade of highlights there are highlights.'

Alice Cooper

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania Mohegan Arena

Age shall not wither The Coop.

The Mohegan Arena is not full, nor anywhere near it. But Alice Cooper – for ever a testament to the youth-extending benefits of a daily round of golf – shall not be deterred. For he is a professional, and for 90 minutes he shall lead his band through a set that's as hit-strewn as a championship boxing match.

Beyond all the familiar set-pieces – the guillotine, the disgraceful manhandling of Cold Ethyl, the lurching Frankenstein's monster – and a series of props beginning with the letter 'c' (cane, crutch, cutlass), there are little moments of personal choreography, as if no opportunity to entertain can be left unattended: Ryan Roxie tossing picks into the air and catching them; Nita Strauss contorting her guitar into increasingly unlikely positions while a strategically placed fan blows her hair wild.

Even among this endless parade of highlights there are highlights: *Bed Of Nails* sounds like the kind of classic Jon Bon Jovi could have written at his peak were he a pervert; the moment a 'fan' invades the stage during *Man Behind The Mask*, only for one of Alice's masked henchmen to slit her throat; a climactic *School's Out*, when the balloons drop, the streamers stream, and Pink Floyd's *Another Brick In The Wall* is wrestled into a chaotic, Technicolor ball of celebration. Timeless.

Fraser Lewry

Alice: using every opportunity to entertain.

Chantel McGregor

Hastings The Carlisle

'Tis rock, not blues.

Chantel McGregor is *not* a blues guitarist. Forget you ever heard she was. Her current album, *The Healing*, marks an extraordinary leap forward into grown-up rock: powerful arrangements and clever time changes. It's her best yet and she's rightfully proud of it, opening tonight's set with its two first songs then declaring that she'll be playing every song from it before she leaves the stage.

McGregor sings with a voice much taller than she is and displays a singular gift as a guitarist. The Sunday night audience at this seafront pub is assaulted by occasionally filthy power chords (as in *Your Fever*) then stroked by transcendental lead work. Throughout the set I try, and fail, to decide who she sounds like. It's fleeting, but at different points I consider three of rock's most lyrical soloists – Alex Lifeson, Neal Schon and Lindsey Buckingham. But none of those guys trod the stage wearing socks rather than sensible footwear. Or made mid-show appeals for some Rennies.

Her band might be only a three-piece but, with Thom Gardner conjuring thunder from his tiny four-piece kit alongside bassist Joe Thorpe, the band come close to echoing the big, big sound of *The Healing*. Confirming how good that album is, five of the set-list's final six come from it, ending with the emotionally-charged title song. And there's no blues in sight.

Neil Jeffries

The Waterboys

Belfast Waterfront Hall

Stetsons, *Dennis Hopper*, maverick glory.

The Waterboys have more than 40 years of songs worth singing, and an expectation that they will continue to bewilder, swerve and enthral. Mike Scott is a bandleader of a singular stripe. Like Neil Young and Van Morrison, he has assembled teams of musicians and extracted their best, returning with fresh visions and extra players, prepared to reach high.

At the centre of this tour is their current album, *Life, Death And Dennis Hopper*. The subject matter is the maverick film guy and cultural outrider. The music is expansive and bold and it demands a deal of indulgence from the listener. Scott holds them with *Letter From An Unknown Girlfriend*, an unvarnished account of Hopper's messy style. Elsewhere the lyrical mentions of Andy Warhol and *Easy Rider* serve to pique the interest.

Senior Waterboy 'Brother' Paul Brown provides flash, laughs and resounding soul on the Hammond organ. He duels with 'Famous' James Hallawell, another keyboard major, on *The Pan Within*, which steers for ecstacy. Scott chooses *Be My Enemy* to compare the paranoia and dread of the 80s with a modern variant. It fits, even the mention of Nazis on the telephone and goons on the landing.

They encore with momentous versions of *The Whole Of The Moon* and *Fisherman's Blues*. They swing and delight, musicians in a supreme state.

Stuart Bailie

Royal Republic

Southampton The 1865

The leather-clad Lovecops return to do it all over again.

Not many bands deliver like Royal Republic deliver – go to one of their shows, and be prepared for subsequent gigs by others to pale by comparison. They're still roaming around Europe on the back of their magnificent *Lovecop* album, with the forthcoming festival season firmly in their sights, so the odd detour to play a club gig or two is no problem.

For Southampton's 1865, the show has been honed into a tight tour de force of righteous rock'n'roll, every second designed to electrify and make you dance like a possessed bastard. Aside from missing songs *Electra* and *Freakshow*, this is the running order the band settled on from the outset of last year's touring and it still lands like a roundhouse kick to the jaw. Opener *My House* immediately ignites a swirling circle pit, and the sweat flows freely on stage and in the audience; frontman Adam Grahn narrowly avoids slipping in the slick carnage when he heads into the audience for the now customary *Ain't Got Time* cowbell audience participation bit, and he's clearly impressed with the energy we're expending through *Baby, Boots, Back From The Dead, Fireman & Dancer* and *Tommy-Gun*. *Lazerlove*, their stunning cover of *Battery* and *RATA-TATA* comprise the encore, and another venue is razed to the ground.

Essi Berelian

NAOMI RAHIM/WIREIMAGE

'The idea of Donington still creating new legends lives on.'

Green Day

The Darkness

Korn

Sleep Token

Airbourne

The Sex Pistols & Frank Carter

Download Festival

Donington Park, Leicestershire

Rock and metal's next generation finally get the chance to step up.

★ Forty-five years on from the inaugural Monsters Of Rock, the shape of rock and metal has changed immensely. But even with three all-new headliners at Donington Park this year the site's status as a Mecca for rock fans remains.

If the *Monty Python* Gregorian chant wasn't enough of a giveaway, **Battlesnake** are firmly tongue-in-cheek. Classic heavy metal riffs fly and gold-and-white priestly robes flap as they leap about a packed Dogtooth tent, ending with half the band in their kegs covering *Let There Be Rock*.

Weezer make their Download debut count. *Hash Pipe, My Name Is Jonas, Perfect Situation, Surf Wax America, Undone – The Sweater Song*… You get it. It's an immense run-through of some of alt.rock's greatest tunes, and a strong case for these nerd rockers to headline Donington in some capacity in future.

Speaking of, **Within Temptation** step up to headlining the Opus Stage. Their amphitheatre-style set feels decidedly Maiden, but the symphonic-metal giants deliver anthems like *Paradise, Bleed Out* and *Mother Earth* with a powerful message of unity that is both emotional and heartfelt.

Green Day's hit-packed 21-song set comes with full bells and whistles, fireworks, streamers and pyro. The repeated "Wey-oh"s are fun and also remind that the band are more Dennis The Menace than Gavrilo Princip, even as Billie Joe Armstrong calls out the current US administration. But when you've got *American Idiot, Holiday, Basket Case* and so much more in your arsenal, revolution becomes secondary to giving people the night of their life.

With Justin Hawkins leaping around shirtless as fireworks go off and jets of flame fly, **The Darkness** look like rock's saviours – again. New songs like *Rock And Roll Party Cowboy* and *Walking Through Fire* sound especially stompy and vital alongside enormous singalongs for *I Believe In A Thing Called Love* and an incongruous *Christmas Time*.

"Do you fucking know who I am?" Frank Carter is having a spot of bother with the **Sex Pistols**. His usual schtick of leaping into the audience seemed a good idea, but a few thousand belligerent punks aren't easily corralled into moshing, *Pretty Vacant* or no. But he takes it in good humour, and once back on stage the set flies by in a roar of yowling punk anthems.

The Dogtooth stage heaves for **Cradle Of Filth**'s headline set. The extreme-metal legends clearly treat the show as something special; jets of flame enhance opener *To Live Deliciously,* and there's a sense of occasion that grows when Dani Filth proposes to his girlfriend mid-set. Sweet *and* satanic.

Sleep Token's lack of stage patter won't do much to win over the casuals, but in terms of spectacle it certainly feels special as they pace around a stunningly detailed set, even earning a few big singalongs for the likes of *Alkaline, The Offering* and *Caramel.*

Airbourne are as reliable as the sunrise. Hair flies and flames spray during an energetic set, the Aussies notching another victory on their bedpost.

Between the glorious sunshine, twanging guitars of *The Art Of Letting Go* and **Myles Kennedy**'s drawling voice, it feels like you could be in Tennessee as much as Donington. Pure southern-tinged bliss.

"We've been playing here since it was still called… Donington," says **Korn** frontman Jonathan Davis. The nu metallers sound exceptionally tight as they march through an old-school-oriented set. It sounds massive, elicits huge singalongs and just feels *right*.

The festival might've changed since Monsters Of Rock, but the idea of Donington still creating new legends lives on in Download.

Rich Hobson

ANDREW WHITTON; MATT HIGGS; TODD OWYOUNG

NEW RELEASES

TEAZE - LIVE AT LIEGE

Out 25th July

CD catalogue No: ESM403

Hailing from Windsor, Canada, TEAZE exploded onto the 1970s rock scene with unrelenting energy and stage presence. Their self-titled debut, originally recorded as demos, unexpectedly launched their recording career in 1976. After signing with Aquarius Records, TEAZE moved to Montreal and released several albums, including ON THE LOOSE and the live TOUR OF JAPAN, gradually building a loyal international fanbase. Their fourth LP, ONE NIGHT STANDS, produced by April Wine's Myles Goodwyn, is often hailed as their finest work, featuring standout tracks like "HEARTLESS WORLD" and "YOUNG AND RECKLESS." Though the band dissolved in the early '80s, a 2018 reunion sparked new life, and they returned for the sold-out TEAZE RESURRECTION concert in Windsor. Many shows have followed, and LIVE AT LIÈGE captures the band at their absolute best—performing in front of a rapturous crowd and proving that their fire still burns as brightly as ever.

Limited edition CD of 1000 copies only, individually numbered 1-1000.

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BOB CATLEY - MIDDLE EARTH

Out Now

CD catalogue No: ESM399
Vinyl catalogue No: ESMV1028

Whilst recording previous album "Legends", Bob Catley and Gary Hughes first discussed their mutual love for the work of JRR Tolkein, which planted a seed in Gary's mind, finally leading to this full-blown concept album based around Tolkein's work on 'The Hobbit' and 'Lord of the Rings'. 'Middle Earth' is, of course, the mythical world where all these events take place, and once again Gary's wonderfully evocative lyrics fully immerse us into this wonderful and colourful universe. As with the previous album 'Legends', the band mostly consisting of members of Ten, such as Vinny Burns and Steve McKenna, with the drum stool being occupied by Dante Fox's Jon Cookesy. Artwork has once again been provided my world-renowned artist Rodney Matthews, whose career is inextricably linked with Magnum/Bob Catley.

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Distributed via Cargo Records UK

Sparks

London Eventim Apollo

Wit, pathos and brutality.

Sparks rock. They've rocked in the past, certainly around 1974's *Kimono My House* album, and their early-80s band were fearsome in a period of commercial trickiness. But, backed by (mostly) three guitarists and a drummer who hits hard as Dinky Diamond, Ron and Russell Mael have never sounded so musically brutal as they do today. Whether it's stomping through the former synth-pop smash *The Number One Song In Heaven*, resurrecting *Reinforcements* and *Goofing Off* or unveiling *Drowned In A Sea Of Tears*, it's a hugely thrilling injection of joy and power.

This being Sparks, there's much more. It's difficult to imagine any other act being capable of following a song from 1972 (*Whippings & Apologies*, where Russell whispers the year to avoid Maels and audience trauma) with one from 2025 (the epic closer *Lord Have Mercy*) without sacrificing relevance or quality control.

Ever-droll Ron talks his way through *Suburban Homeboy*, Russell gambols around the stage like someone half a century younger, and first ever hit *This Town Ain't Big Enough For Both Of Us* sounds as fresh as the rarely played ominous lullaby *Please Don't Fuck Up My World*. Best comes last of all with the desperately moving *All That*, a magical evocation of, well, all that the Maels are and have been. After all these years, they really have no business being this extraordinary.

John Aizlewood

'Ron and Russell Mael have never sounded so musically brutal.'

Ron and Russell Mael: still hugely thrilling after 50-plus years.

10cc

Hampton Court Palace

Gouldman's art school genre-blenders endure with some great songs.

Amid the picnic lawns and stately Tudor towers of the Hampton Court Palace festival, 10cc make for polite subversives. In a courtly inner courtyard Graham Gouldman and co. arrive dressed for the casual royal garden party but with sedition up their blazer sleeves: they open with uber-capitalist satire *The Wall Street Shuffle*, 1974's now-staggering premonition of Thatcher's neo-liberal banker state – a virtual fist thumped on the banquet table – and follow with *Art For Art's Sake*, skewering the cash-over-creativity music industry both then and now.

What follows is one of rock history's more madcap greatest-hits sets, reflecting the montage songwriting of 70s art rock's most genre-splicing band. Some classics homage specific styles: country rock on recidivist anthem *Good Morning Judge*, soft-rock lounge music on a sublime *I'm Not In Love*, calypso and reggae on *From Rochdale To Ocho Rios* and the problematic *Dreadlock Holiday*. An a capella *Donna* is particularly wonderful. Others resemble dream collages of sonic pasts. It can be disorientating and scrappy – *Clockwork Creep* comes on, variously, like a vaudevillian operetta Beach Boys Disney song. It can also be magical, as plane-crash drama *I'm Mandy, Fly Me* marries airline jingles with ambient dream sequences and an oom-pah rescue scene.

A revitalising art-pop infusion.

Mark Beaumont

Rosalie Cunningham

Edinburgh The Hive

Former Purson prime mover goes stellar.

Returning to her family roots in Edinburgh, Rosalie Cunningham has an instant rapport in this subterranean bolthole just off the Royal Mile. If Queen had recorded a Bond theme in 1972 between *Diamonds Are Forever* and *Live And Let Die*, then it would probably have sounded a lot like her opening number *To Shoot Another Day*.

There's a playful stagecraft and cheeky chemistry at work that pulls the threads of cult cinema, glam rock and classic songwriting together with flair. Claudia Gonzalez Diaz plays a Rickenbacker guitar as if it's part of her being, then delivers a mystical nod to Jethro Tull on flute. Cunningham looks every inch the rock star reminiscent of Countess Dracula and Hammer Horror siren Ingrid Pitt in an Ace Frehley space suit. During *Spook Racket* she stomps her glittery platform boots, claps her hands, shakes her long, raven-black hair, and shares lead guitar with Rosco Wilson, who, underneath a 70s footballer haircut and moustache, builds the riff. *Timothy Martin's Conditioning School* is a playful comment on JD Wetherspoon's weekend booze culture, reminiscent of the Beatles' *Sgt Pepper* era or Bowie's self-titled '67 album. The likes of this and *Home* draw upon a similar rich well of English eccentrics and uncanny characters. The band are a well-oiled machine, and each member brings a unique and dynamic presence to the stage.

Richard Purden

Bruce Springsteen And The E Street Band

Frankfurt Deutsche Bank Park

He's still the man in charge.

At first, the sound has me questioning the wisdom of splashing out on flights and eye-wateringly expensive stand tickets, but Springsteen And The E Street Band are possibly the greatest live act in the history of rock'n'roll, and lift-off is truly achieved by the time he gets to *Atlantic City*. When he busts out Jimmy Cliff's *Trapped* (a tour debut), all gripes are forgotten and that money seemed sensibly invested.

As reported everywhere, on this run Springsteen is taking aim at "the criminal clown". But even if you question political statements at a rock show, you can't help but be moved by his disappointment at the betrayal of "the America I've sung to you about for fifty years" and his faith that it will endure, before a tear-inducing *My City In Ruins*.

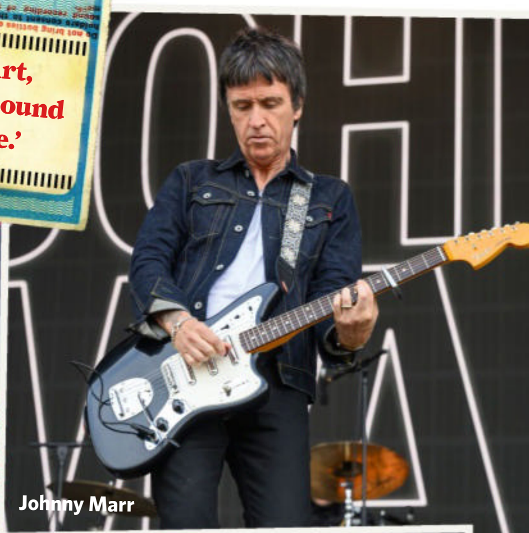
There are other moments of beauty – there always are: an entire stadium joining his lonesome howl for the dreams that died down by *The River*; the venue very nearly levitating with pure joy during *Hungry Heart*; the non-stop transition from *The Rising* to *Badlands*; Steven Van Zandt's pirate grin as his cutlass earring swings in time to *Murder Incorporated*; drummer Max Weinberg shaking the foundations with *Born In The USA*; and Bruce making that last call to say goodbye to *Bobby Jean* which guts me every time. Phenomenal.

Pat Carty

CAPITAL PICTURES / ALAMY

Public Image Ltd

'Living Pop Art, Kraftwerk still sound like the future.'


Johnny Marr

Happy Mondays

Billy Idol

The Damned

Forever Now
Kraftwerk

Forever Now Festival

Milton Keynes National Bowl

It's a decidedly mixed bag at the inaugural "post-punk" gathering.

★ A sunny June afternoon in Milton Keynes, and John Lydon is in typically happy-go-lucky mode. "One of very few festivals where all the bands backstage get on," the Spongebob Squarepants of punk says, grinning. "And I'm about to fucking ruin it!" Boom boom!

Welcome to the inaugural one-day Forever Now festival, billed as a celebration of all things "post-punk", a fuzzy term that appears to encompass every vaguely alternative rock genre from the past 50 years. But **Public Image Ltd** hit the nail squarely on the head with their punchy set. From their muscular, chiming *Rise* to their pummelling demolition of Lydon's aggro-rave Leftfield collaboration *Open Up*, PiL are still carrying a blowtorch for post-punk's forward-facing modernist ethos with their gnarly fusion of prog-metal, funk, disco and dub. Lydon is clearly relishing his latter-day role as foul-mouthed music-hall comedian too. His punch lines are certainly impeccably timed. "I apologise for nothing, except the karaoke Sex Pistols," he quips midway through the set. "Are you proud to be British?" he muses as he departs. "C**ts."

The Psychedelic Furs are also on grand form, with ageless smoothie Richard Butler radiating suave insouciance as ever, looking less like a pension-age rocker, more like a louche Edwardian detective with a manageable laudanum habit.

An eternally boyish **Johnny Marr** delivers the goods too, wisely balancing his fairly anodyne solo material with crowd-pleasing Smiths classics. Stand-out moments include a luminous, flamenco-infused reworking of *Please, Please, Please, Let Me Get What I Want*, a thunderous gallop through *There Is A Light That Never Goes Out*, and a rousing cover of Iggy Pop's *The Passenger*. Whatever reputational damage his estranged former bandmate Morrissey may continue to accrue, Marr is keeping their shared legacy alive with increasing confidence as a singer and frontman.

Later in the evening, Marr returns to the main stage for a brief two-song reunion with his post-Smiths band **The The**, although his sparkly virtuosity can not rescue Matt Johnson's bespoke-suited collective of scowling blues-rock solicitors from their essential baked-in dullness. Johnson's weakness for leaden lyrical puns and clunky political slogans, unleavened by any trace of humour of humility, make for a very dry bowl of musical gruel.

Stacked with cult legends and big personalities, Forever Now is a pretty great event overall, but it suffers from a few clumsy technical issues. When timings on the second stage begin to overrun from mid-afternoon, the organisers resort to a very blunt instrument by abruptly cutting the monitors midway through several performances. **The Damned** and **The Jesus And Mary Chain** are two bands left dangling like this, and both express their exasperation on stage and on social media afterwards. Mancunian party animals **Happy Mondays** barely seemed to notice the sudden change, with Shaun Ryder and Bez chugging through a climactic *Wrote For Luck* regardless, seemingly oblivious to the monitors' silence. Or indeed to what planet they are on.

Billy Idol is probably the most incongruous inclusion at Forever Now, his sun-bronzed weekend-biker soft rock having long ago given up any claim on punk credibility. All the same, *Eyes Without A Face* still conjours up an eerie beauty, and Steve Stevens still rocks out like he's duelling with Slash at Download.

Festival headliners **Kraftwerk** are arguably even more removed from any post-punk manifesto, but their ongoing influence on multiple generations of arty avant-rock remains indelible. As ever, the German quartet's techno-utopian symphonies feel strikingly fresh, elevated by a stunningly crisp sound and dazzling widescreen video montages. A sublime piece of living Pop Art, Kraftwerk still sound like the future, not so much post-punk as post-everything.

Stephen Dalton

KEVIN NIXON

His Lordship

Hoxton Hall, London

Rocking trio turn up the heat to sweltering levels.

★ The sheer chutzpah that beats at the heart of His Lordship is not only to be admired but also loved. Playing fully suited and booted on what is the hottest evening of the year so far, singer-guitarist James Walbourne (moonlighting from his long-time gig as Pretenders' axe-man) emits a halo of sweat that sprays in all directions with every shake of his head. At his waist, the stream of perspiration that runs down the body of his Gibson SG actually looks as if it's stripping the paint away. And with drummer Kristoffer Sonne submitting a sick note, it falls upon Walbourne's brother, Rob, to man the traps with just two days practice to unleash material from new album *Bored Animal*, which itself is only a day old.

What might prove a problem for some is mere grist to the mill for His Lordship. Dropping punk'n'roll explosives with deadly precision from a great height, the strike rate of the new material is high. *Old Romantic, Weirdo In The Park* and *Marc–Andre Leclerc* are high velocity buzz bombs of similar calibre to *All Cranked Up, I Live In The City* and *Jackie Works For The NHS* as melodicism collides with sonic savagery. Noting the packed venue's music hall past and the fact the brothers' Great Great Grand Uncle Lupino Lane once trod its very boards, Walbourne takes an unexpected detour with George Formby's *Leaning On A Lamp Post*, but it's reeling that's done by one and all from tonight's intense onslaught.

Julian Marszalek

'Dropping precision punk'n'roll explosives from a great height'

James Walbourne: paint-stripping riffs.

John McKay's Reactor

London 100 Club

Former Banshee returns in triumph.

★ When guitarist John McKay and drummer Kenny Morris walked out of Siouxsie And The Banshees in September '79, they took the band's trademark post-punk sound with them. Siouxsie had the profile and tenacity to prevail with a modified MO but the Banshees were never quite the same. While McKay's sonic legacy was huge with a generation of guitarists (not least Geordie Walker and U2's Edge) mimicking his trademark ice-pick stylings, his subsequent solo efforts never quite took flight. Until now. Following a lengthy hiatus, McKay's formed Reactor with a pair of Priscillas (Jen Brown on Sioux-indebted vocals, Jola – also an Ant – on toms-heavy post-Morris drums) and Sid-adjacent bassist Billy King, to basically take up where *Join Hands* – the Banshees' McKay-crafted, demi-classic second album that never got properly toured - left off. Static as a marble icon, McKay deploys a choice selection of jarring riffs - crucial tonal alternatives to punk's glam thrash - that still supply hackle-raising chills (*Switch, Placebo Effect, The Staircase (Mystery)* and, in extremis, *Playground Twist*). Fresh cuts from new Reactor album, *Sixes And Sevens* may stem from a lost, post-Banshee epoch, but sound startlingly fresh. The band evoke an appropriate proto-goth vibe that'll doubtless cohere over time, but tonight is all about McKay.

Smouldering, astonishing, back where he belongs.

Ian Fortnam

Quadrophenia: A Mod Ballet

London Sadler's Wells

Pete Townshend's masterpiece reinterpreted for hoofers.

★ With its author's partner Rachel Fuller acting as musical director, this Mod Ballet is soundtracked by an instrumental combo of the RPO's *Classic Quadrophenia* and re-vamped versions of *My Generation* and *I Can't Explain* that feature new guitar and harmonica parts (from Townshend and Daltrey) alongside original Moon and Entwistle elements. It sounds incongruous, brave… a folly?

This is the sort of criticism being aimed at this rock opera/interpretive dance combo by those who haven't seen it. But it's hard to fault. Pete Townshend recently revealed that *Quadrophenia*'s key characters are Jimmy's parents, and this new interpretation tilts the narrative more in their direction, away from his mates and inwards toward his mental turmoil, with his inner voices (and even meds) played as actual characters. It's only ever an arresting, beautifully choreographed spectacle with Paris Fitzpatrick shining particularly bright as Jimmy. Rock lifers will probably feel uncomfortable at a ballet, I know I did, but this frisson only adds to the freshness and appeal of the experience. It's vital, filled with a raw, visceral kinetic energy - the Brighton fight scene's dazzling - and, using The Who's album rather than Franc Roddam's film as its template, utterly unpredictable. A total triumph.

Ian Fortnam

Public Image Ltd

Oxford O2 Academy

Hot in the city.

★ Another June heatwave and PiL are playing to a packed hall in Oxford's Cowleyfornia. Sweat slides down the walls and the beery egg fart-tainted air is thicker than a Victorian Whitechapel fog. Lydon is uncharacteristically reserved. "Are you still there?" he asks of the dehydrated and dazed audience following an agitated version of *World Destruction*, his 1984 collaboration with Time Zone.

Focusing on PiL's mid-80s era, the setlist reflects the automaton crowd and makes an aptly caustic machine-like soundtrack for the sultry heat. It's like a Tennessee Williams play reimagined in an oppressive drought-stricken urban dystopia. *This Is Not A Love Song* is a sprawling ad-libbed jam that segues into a plaintive and meandering *Poptones*, followed by the persistent dread funk of *Death Disco*. Lydon humorously harangues the front row for being "fucking posh c**ts" when they rebuff the water offered by security to avoid desiccation.

Impressive new drummer Mark Roberts nails *Flowers Of Romance*'s thundering tribal tattoo and pounds satisfyingly through *Shoom* (a PiL modern classic, now a Lydon signature tune). *Hawaii* would have been beautifully appropriate tonight – perhaps its subject matter is still too raw. But as the title of this peregrination promises (This Is Not The Last Tour), PiL will be back. Pursuing – as the song goes – what the world needs now: another fuck off.

Alex Burrows

BRAD MERRETT

'As the big hits arrive, Idol greets them like the high-time anecdotes they are'

The crimped hair! The bare chest! The leather-hewn accessories! Steve Stevens and Billy compare 1980s style accoutrements.

That dynamic stage set in full.

Billy Idol/New Model Army

Wembley OVO Arena

A curious live combo sees the hard touring post-punk folk rockers playing second fiddle to Sir William of Broad. Rebel yells all round!

★ Welcome, true believers, to the Church Of The Roaring Idol and the Unholy Mind. On the backdrop screens, visuals of blood-red scaffolding form a post-apocalyptic cathedral centred around a deific outline of punk's snarling biker messiah as the man himself – a remarkably unweathered Billy Idol – spins onstage in sci-fi leathers to the defiantly grimy groove rock of *Still Dancing*. He seems somewhat risen again; Idol's new album-cum-rock'n'roll memoir *Dream Into It* – the first half reminiscing over his peak years, the second a reflection on later life – is his first in eleven years, and he attacks his Wembley comeback like a rebel reborn.

Taking up the sidecar are New Model Army, themselves sounding revived. With their elemental calamity rock, battle drums and quasi-mystical Vikingcore imagery – storms gather across mountain ranges, gods of nature return, bargains are struck with Satan and ancient bloody battles rage like a Netflix fantasy series script – they make for a strident and stirring pulse raiser. *White Light* is a compulsive warrior rock opener; *Before I Get Old* snarls savagely against the dying of the light. And as ancient as the tone may be, New Model Army's messaging proves sadly prophetic. *Here Comes the War*, seemingly played on military drums and heavy ordnance, is as pertinent as ever.

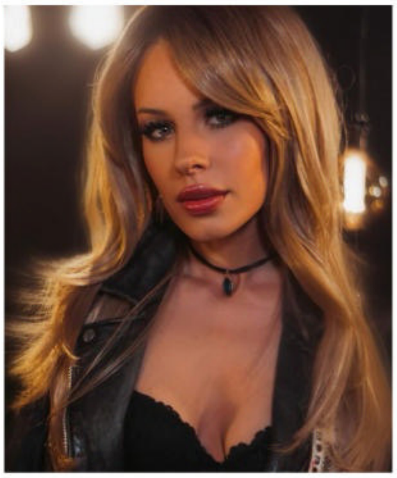
Idol, on the other hand, has little truck with the present day. Where's the sexy in that? Instead, having apparently plundered the Sunset Strip of 1986 for a backing band to play elaborate flamenco solos while he disappears to change between an array of rock god shirts and jackets, he roots himself so firmly in his 80s LA heyday that you half expect a skirt-flapping cameo from Kelly LeBrock in a studded neck collar and half a t-shirt. Classics like *Flesh For Fantasy* and *Cradle Of Love* – for which Billy gets up-close with the backing singers, oblivious to the Yewtree nature of lines like *'the rebel took a little child bride'* – are pure gutter-crawling sleaze boogie full of lustful roars and hog-straddling attitude. And the *Dream Into It* numbers, about *'my journey through this life'*, revel in the wild living of old. Punchy, punky skater rocker *77* (lacking its Avril Lavigne guest spot tonight) throws us into a rumble between skins and teddy boys on the King's Road, and *Too Much Fun* is a catalogue of errant rock star behaviour set to tarmac scorching pop metal: *'I made a living breaking rules, I kissed a girl and smoked some h, I'd flirt with death to feel alive…'*

There are moments of reflection and regret too, particularly when the evocative 80s synths of *Dream Into It* shroud sentiments like *'I'm begging for a chance to see the sunrise again'* and *'I'm dying to live'*, or when *People I Love* emerges as an open apology to the loved ones he's let down – parents, lovers, children. His voice is also faded; still capable of almighty roars but exposed beside Jessica Childress's storming ownership of their *Gimme Shelter* cover and reduced to a grainy croak on the *'yeah'*s of *Mony Mony*.

Still, *Eyes Without A Face* sounds freshly sumptuous and as the big hits arrive Idol greets them like the high-time anecdotes they are. *Rebel Yell*, irrefutable evidence that Idol was an unrecognised goth pioneer back in the day, is introduced with the story of the title arising from a bottle of whisky he once saw the Stones swigging from; for the E Street groove of *Hot In The City* he takes us back to the sweltering New York summer of 1981. Generation X's Tony James joins in for *Ready Steady Go* and *Dancing with Myself* and it all ends amid much shattering digital stained glass on *White Wedding*. The midnight hour approaches, but Idol clearly craves more.

Mark Beaumont

HARSH PATEL/PRESS



The Soundtrack Of My Life

Guitarist/singer/songwriter ***Orianthi*** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to her.

Interview: **Chris Lord**

When you're handpicked to be the guitarist on Michael Jackson's This Is It farewell tour, it's the kind of flattering headline that tends to follow you around.

Fifteen years later Orianthi Panagaris's career is still flourishing. The talented Greek-Australian singer-songwriter and guitarist has also toured with Alice Cooper and made records with Richie Sambora, but chiefly she's on a hot streak of solo albums. You don't get to work with artists of the Cooper/Sambora/etc calibre without having an abundance of fretboard razzmatazz, but it's in carefully crafted songs where Orianthi really comes to life. Her new album *Some Kind Of Feeling* radiates with a moreish style of hook-heavy, blues-infused pop-rock that underscores the name Orianthi as much more than a masterly guitarist.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

My parents had amazing record collections. With my dad it was Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, Jimi Hendrix, BB King, Santana. My mum's was Frank Sinatra, Bryan Adams and lots of country records. But I would say The Beatles. *Twist And Shout* was the first song I ever learned. Then it was BB King, trying to nail down the vibrato on *The Thrill Is Gone*. BB King really shaped my life. Lyrically and the way he sang and played, he meant everything he did. It was very impactful.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

It was an original song of mine which I played at a school assembly. It was called *Spin Your Jackets Around*. At the time, I was at this college and I hated the blazers they made us wear. I wanted everyone to take them off. So I wrote this song. It was my first real song, three chords and very Beatles-esque. Songwriting came first and foremost to me. I wanted to play the guitar but also to be able to tell a story and write something that people remember.

THE GUITAR HERO

I would say Carlos Santana, because it changed my life when I first heard him play *Europa*. So to me he's definitely a guitar hero. When I was eighteen I got to meet him and jam in front of fifteen thousand people in Adelaide – playing for about forty-five minutes. Carlos is like an uncle to me, and it's truly an honour to know him. He's very inspiring.

THE SINGER

Stevie Nicks. I listened to a lot of Fleetwood Mac when I was younger. I loved her style, her singing and the way she would phrase things. *Landslide* and all those songs. There's a real presence about her and she's such a storyteller. Stevie once asked me to play on one of her songs, but I couldn't because I was on tour with Alice Cooper at the time.

> **"I loved Stevie Nicks's style, her singing and the way she would phrase things."**

THE SONGWRITER

The Beatles. I got into songwriting when I was really young. I wanted to write my own after hearing them. It was incredible the way they crafted their songs and the magic they had with George Martin. It's insane how many legendary songs they created.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

For me it's between Jimi Hendrix's *Band Of Gypsys* and Santana's *Abraxas*. Santana made me want to play electric guitar – that one really affected me. His tone and phrasing are so incredible, and the fusion of blues, Latin, rock, even jazz, and the way he put it all together.

THE BEATLES
PAST MASTERS

SANTANA
ABRAXAS

AC/DC
BACK IN BLACK

Prince and the Revolution
Let's Go Crazy

THE BEST COVER VERSION

I'm gonna pick a weird one, because it's something I was just thinking about the other day. I thought it was cool when Alien Ant Farm covered *Smooth Criminal* – a heavy, unexpected version.

THE MOST UNDERRATED ARTIST EVER

Jonny Lang is an artist who I think should be much bigger. He's an incredible singer and guitar player. Obviously lots of people know who he is, but I think he could be given more credit. He has a real gospel singing voice to go with the guitar playing.

MY GUILTY PLEASURE

I don't know if it's guilty, but I listen to a lot of pop music. I went through a phase when I was listening to The 1975. They're pop songs, but the melodies are cool. It has such a vibe, almost eighties, which I like. If I'm gonna listen to a pop record, that's probably it.

THE SONG I AIR-GUITAR TO

If I was very drunk – and I would still rather ask for a guitar! – maybe *Back In Black*. Those chords are mean and tough. Or *Whole Lotta Love*. They're brutal when they come in. Very simple but heavy as hell.

MY SATURDAY NIGHT/PARTY SONG

Teddy Swims is one of my favourite newer artists, so probably something from his record. I dig it. It's got that older, Amy Winehouse-sounding production, in a way. Either that or Stevie Ray Vaughan's *Live At The El Mocambo*.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Probably Jeff Buckley's *Last Goodbye*. His voice and the lyrics are both so haunting. The whole of the *Grace* record is great. He was one of those really special artists.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

I don't want people crying. I want something happy – maybe a Prince song like *Let's Go Crazy*. ●

Orianthi's new album Some Kind Of Feeling is out now via www.orianthi.me

ORIANTHI: ALEX BROWN/PRESS; STEVIE NICKS: MICHAEL PUTLAND/GETTY

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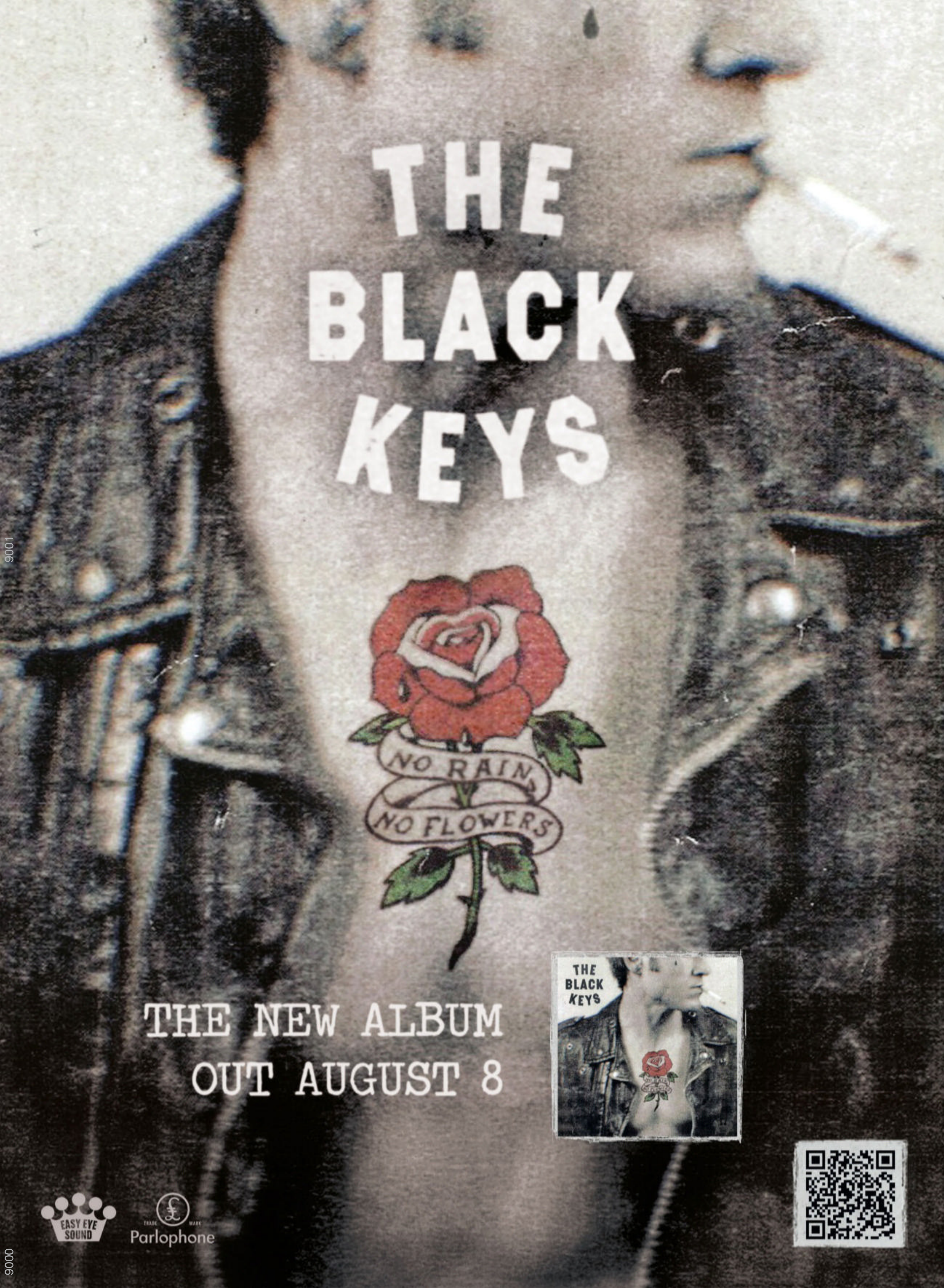
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